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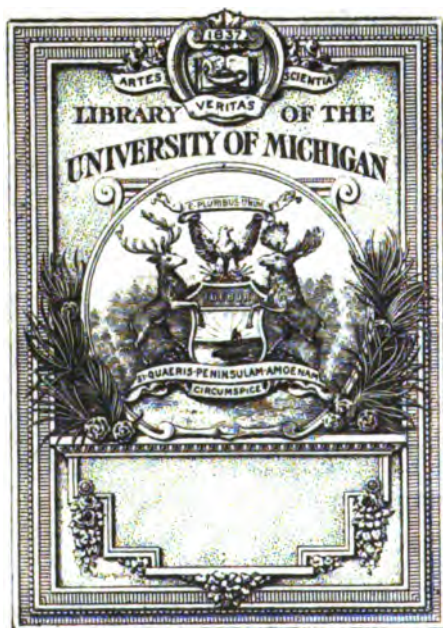
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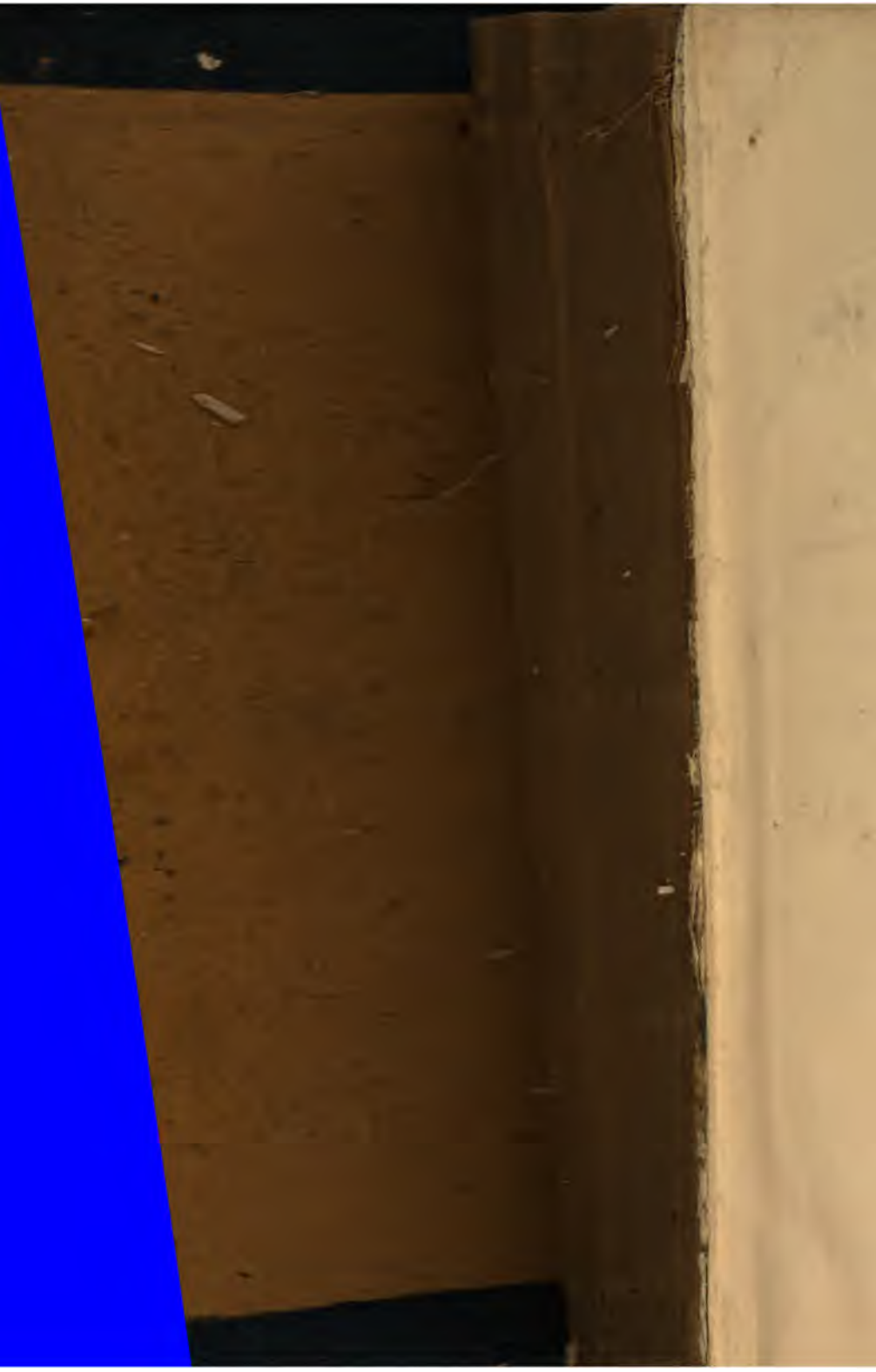
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Erica's Divorce.

By MRS. BOYSE,

Author of "THAT MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY," etc.

AN old weather-beaten, grey village church, with a graveyard around it full of roughly hewn stones, engraved with the quaintest of epitaphs.

Inside, worm-eaten, high-backed pews and other signs of decay and neglect, partly hidden under a profusion of flowers—homely blossoms enough, from the meadows and cottage gardens, arranged perhaps inartistically, but in a fashion that seemed in keeping with the low roof and heavy stone pillars of the old church.

At the altar the sweetest flower of all, Erica Leicester, slim, girlish, and lovely in her simple bridal dress, and by her side her bridegroom, Morton Yardley, tall, strong, and handsome, of the type of masculine beauty that would have befitted a gladiator.

"To love, honour and cherish"—he spoke the well-known words firmly and looked down triumphantly at his young bride; their eyes met—hers with a world of loving shyness in their soft depths.

She fancied him the ideal of her romantic fancies, the true knight of whom she had dreamed among the curious old clipped yew trees of her guardian's sombre garden, and she smiled, half frightened but proudly, on the village folk, who showered rose leaves on her like scented pink and white snow as she left the

young, and the most narrow-minded, severe school cannot entirely suppress the life and spirits of her charge.

Then came the sad hour of parting from her school to return to the house where laughter was unknown spoke except when necessary. Summer and winter brought no change, and the gay, bright spirit of might have been crushed but for her homely will whose simple joys and sorrows Erica threw her only interest in life. Till one never-t Morton Yardley came on some matter of business an old title-deed, and finding this unexpected fell in love at first sight with her, as she graceful, reaching up to restore a little in a mossy apple tree, and eagerly pressed to her before their acquaintance was made.

A month later Erica sat with her mother on a wide balcony, heavily garlanded with other creepers. Before them stretched a garden in which the moon was making its way through sloping thickets of the garden. Rang out from the orange trees long festoons of light, and from the garden blazing. Sometimes as they flew into the air a burst of music, for the garden was full of were rejoicings, and her husband's hearts to put.

Morton lay on a pile of passionate might.

Pr
for
by

...cession, inwardly marvelled that a girl reared as she had been should have caught the trick of the world hitherto unknown so aptly. "*On chasse de race*," he thought, and being of those who admire what others do, was accordingly delighted with his bride.

Three years from the date of that delightful first ball Erica Yardley, just arrived at legal womanhood, was lovelier even than in those first days of happiness ; but alas for the changed outlook.

It was the old, old, sad story, Morton's passion had cooled never to revive again.

Perhaps the man's nature was fickle and he could not help it, but there was, unluckily, a brutal substratum in it, and when the shortlived love dream was over he spared his sensitive young wife in no way. Harsh words and open neglect succeeded the caresses and adoration which had been her hourly portion. He openly became a slave to other women, and she was forced to tolerate it lest the world should speak of these enchantresses too severely.

One child had been born of the marriage, a delicate, fragile little girl, on which Erica lavished all the love of her nature, but it lived only for a short time, dying while its mother was at a ball, to which she had been forced to go, because her absence might have been construed into a slight to the hostess, just then the latest object of Morton's admiration.

Though unbeloved by her husband, Erica was still fascinating to all other men, and many would gladly have enrolled themselves as her cavaliers. Her unprotected position was so painfully obvious that it roused the chivalrous instincts of some and the baser feelings of others. But though Morton cared so little for her he could be as jealous and suspicious as if she were the idol of his heart. When the poor girl's youth at rare intervals asserted

boundaries allowed by an indulgent world to a man of fashion with plenty to spend in entertaining, so, even had the unhappy wife thought of a divorce, there were no grounds for getting one.

Morton had never struck her; she was not deserted, for she shared his home; she could not even prove him unfaithful, as he spoke of her in affectionate terms to all the Mrs. Grundys his acquaintance, who would, he knew, run about and say, "Mr. Yardley! it is so sad for him that his wife should be so odd. He told me, quite in confidence, you know—I do not dream of telling any one but you—but there is a strain well—melancholia in her family, and he is very anxious."

Poor Erica! one half of the women she knew believed he was with insanity, and the others, who were more keen-sighted, laughed at Morton's clever invention, scorned the girl who let them all in personal charms, yet could not keep one from her, because she had loved him too well and let him.

The overstrained bow gives way at last, the creature can be brought to bay—and there was no blood in Erica's veins; she came of a line that had sent soldiers and sailors to the country for many generations. Tired past endurance, she began to answer Morton to defy him, enraging him almost to madness. He plumed himself on her helplessness, and became at his mercy, for he took care that no man should be intimate at his house. The summer in Sorrento, and their villa down to the sea. Morton kept a boat out when he wished her to play, but she was left to pass the long hours as she pleased, and found her superfluous. The hours, in the best sense, all too short. Not long after the dark shadows vanished from the thin cheeks rounded, the brightness began to return once more when one is still young.

Morton might have been suspicious in his own affairs, but he was adored, was visible, and could not out-

yacht which had been cruising about the coast for some time.

The climax came suddenly. Morton, to please the countess, designed a brilliant fête; every whim of hers was consulted, the invitations were dictated by her. Erica had merely to exert herself to the utmost to carry out the details. The most lavish expenditure seemed a trifle to the enamoured Morton, and nothing was spared on the masque, which was a combination of ball and water party, illuminated boats awaiting the guests as a change from dancing.

The clever Italian let her English admirer tax himself to the utmost, and then eluding him, by ingenious change of domino, spent the hours with his rival. Half mad with rage, Morton awaited the supper time, when unmasking would be general, and then it appeared that the hostess was missing, but her husband, whose thoughts were centred elsewhere, took no heed of the fact, though behind fans and in corners the guests were interchanging their ideas.

Their suspicions were not groundless. There had been a strange boat among the little illuminated flotilla which, when the silver trumpets played the call to supper, disappeared unnoticed in the general race to the landing-place, and with extinguished lights stole quickly over the bay to where, nearer Castellamare, the yacht with steam up lay ready to be off at a moment's notice, and before Morton knew that his victim had at length escaped from his clutches, the "Sea Swallow," hull down, was flying across the waves safe from immediate pursuit.

Erica, worn out with excitement and anxiety, lay sleeping soundly as a child below, but the companion of her flight paced the deck scanning the horizon as the dawn flushed sea and sky with rose and pale yellow, and occasionally consulting the captain, who abstained from all comment, though he looked rather self-satisfied, and turned his glass also pretty frequently to the direction from which they had come.

As the morning hours passed by it was very clear that there was no chance of pursuit by sea, and it was hardly probable that there should be. Morton Yardley owned no yacht, and he was

hardly enough liked by his male acquaintance to render it likely that a fully found steam yacht would be at his service for such a purpose, even if it were sure that the fugitive had gone by water; but, truth to state, her flight was shrouded in mystery. The conspirators had confided in no one, and those who really knew anything of the stolen meetings were by no means sure whence had come the stranger, who had never indeed been clearly seen. A great dark cloak and slouched hat had once or twice been visible among the bushes, but the individual thus disguised was known by sight to no one.

So the "Sea Swallow" slipped smoothly over the blue water, and Erica after a while felt thoroughly safe and happy. The change from the old life of slavery to Morton's temper and love of tyranny to quiet and freedom brought relief to her overtried nerves, and leaning back in a great deck chair, she idly watched the rippling waves, the sea birds, or the sailors at their work, feeling incapable of thinking of past or future, and striving to enjoy the hour of sunshiny rest and peace, without even asking whither they were bound.

This could not last long. Erica was too clear-headed and quick to remain in a kind of dreary lethargy, and in a few days showed herself alive to the exigencies of the situation.

"Must I get a divorce?" she asked sadly after listening to her companion's opinions.

"Must you go through the courts, you mean, Erica? Why certainly, the ends of the earth would not hide you from that man otherwise, even though you say now that you will never remarry any one," returned the yacht owner, Cecil Ringwood by name, dark, handsome, and betrayed by a slight accent to be of American origin.

"Would not a separation be enough? the court would be so dreadful," pleaded Erica.

"Why, you little goose," returned Cecil, lighting a cigarette, "of course you need not appear. Do you think that I would submit you to such indignities; that brute cares for nothing but money, and I can afford to pay for my whistle—damages he shall have, and that will console him for your escape."

"If only he had been just a little kind," sobbed Erica with a sudden remembrance of the days long past. "But, Cecil, it was such misery to be slighted, insulted—and my baby might never

have died if I had been with her, but I do feel so wicked in doing what I have done."

"Don't talk rot, my little one," said Cecil curtly. "It's time such men as Mr. Morton Yardley learn that women are not their lawful prey, to be tortured daily as you were. Come, dry up now, and think of the lovely times we'll have together. I just surmise that there will be no place in creation worth seeing besides those we mean to look in at."

A savage man was Morton Yardley when, outwitted by his wife and coolly thrown over by the countess, he found himself in a galling position and exposed to the covert sneers of his acquaintances.

He had felt so confident that Erica was in complete submission, that her flight wounded his pride sorely. The countess was quite beyond the reach of his malevolence, and could laugh at his impotent wrath, so he determined at least to revenge himself on the woman over whom the law gave him power—at least, if he could find her; and apparently Erica was reckless, for she was speedily heard of as staying at a London hotel with Mr. Cecil Ringwood.

Beside himself with rage at their effrontery, Yardley rushed off, fully determined to openly insult and challenge the man who had put such an affront on him; but on reaching the hotel he learnt that he was a day too late; they had gone, leaving only the address of a lawyer in New York, but ample evidence was easily obtained for instituting a divorce, which Yardley pushed on as fast as possible, though he did not even know his rival by sight, and hardly stayed to marvel why Erica, proud, refined, and pure as she had always seemed, should have thrown herself on the protection of a stranger.

Others wondered less; frank, fearless women did not hesitate to declare that she had been goaded past endurance. Men privately exchanged the opinion that Yardley was "a bad egg," but these were in the minority; others openly rejoiced in the tarnishing of her fair name. She was out of the pale of society now, and they could throw a little more dirt on her, for at least they had always kept the eleventh commandment, which is, "Thou shalt not be found out."

An office in a back street in the hottest month of the New York summer is not a tempting place, and the man who occupied it, like his rooms, showed clearly that he had been worsted in the

pursuit of Dame Fortune, for his well-worn clothes matched the poverty-stricken bareness of his surroundings. He was not good-looking, but still in his clear, keen, honest eyes and firm mouth there was something which inspired confidence, and the tall, good figure and well-shaped head gave him a certain look of distinction.

He was reading with close attention a long letter and referring with knitted brow to some legal works as he read.

He did not soliloquize, not being on the stage, but thought as he read the letter, "Who but Cecil could have conceived and carried out such a Quixotic plan? If it becomes known, even over here, it would surely mean social ruin. Would it, though? After all one never can tell what the upper Four Hundred will think, and perhaps the husband would be the one to find society a thorny corner, something like sitting on a porcupine in pyjamas, and Cecil and the lady would no doubt be the lions of the hour—and I should stand the racket—Cecil would pay, but I should lose my profession, and have to go West, or something."

He looked round the dreary office, brushed away half-a-dozen flies which were holding a gymkana on his forehead, opened a window to shut it again in disgust, as the hot air blew in redolent of stale fish and other sickening odours.

"I might afford to risk such a Paradise," he thought bitterly. "Work, brains, honesty have done nothing for me, I will chance it, and agree to Cecil's plans."

Five minutes later John Sewell was aboard a horse-car, bound for a good but quiet hotel, where Erica Yardley and Cecil Ringwood were temporarily located.

The well-furnished parlour and dainty lunch were a pleasant change from the fifth-rate eating-house and tablecloth black with flies, where his mid-day meal was usually devoured. Erica's sweet manner and lovely face appealed to his chivalrous instincts, and by the time that over the coffee and choice cigarettes he had heard from Cecil an account of the long misery of hourly slights and insults that she had undergone, he was enlisted heart and soul in her cause, for whatever an American may be, respect and tenderness for women are ingrained in his nature.

"The mean-spirited skunk, the cowardly 'possum!" he ejaculated. "But say now, Cecil, could not the lady have separated, and not thrown away her character as she has done?"

Cecil recapitulated all the arguments in favour of their present

plan of action, and John Sewell, who thought less of a divorce than an Englishman would do, was silenced if not convinced, partly, perhaps, because he felt that he had no power or business to interfere, and partly because the enormous fee offered was a temptation to a man who had hardly enough food, and knew what it was to live for days on bread and vegetables.

"You are off at once for two or three years, Cecil, as I understand, in your yacht, and I am to act for you. Of course, neither of you appear, and judgment must of course go against you, probably Mr. Yardley will claim compensation; he is the sort of high-souled rattle-snake that will plaster his honour with bank notes. It will be a costly business, I must warn you," added Mr. Sewell rather suggestively.

"Who cares?" replied Cecil defiantly. "I can afford it, Jack, if any one can. Why the good old mine improves daily, and I am rolling up no end of a pile, as well as spending."

The ring of exulting self-satisfaction in the speaker's tones touched John Sewell sharply for a moment with a sense of the contrast. Cecil and he had been playfellows when both were alike poor, the children of English gentlemen who had emigrated to retrieve their fortunes. They had shared their meals, climbed trees, run barefoot in the brooks, and been happy and careless as the squirrels and birds; but one father was clever and fortunate, he had found a rich mine, and by his own hard work and good management died a millionaire; the other, feckless, helpless, unthrifty, went from bad to worse, and John had nothing and no one to help him to make a start in life.

Cecil's quick eyes caught the look on Sewell's face.

"I am a real cur, bragging of money, and you, Jack, my dear, dear old mate, tell me how are you off for it. No, no, don't lie; I know your face too well; you used to look like that when you had no bread and molasses and swore you were not hungry rather than have mine. Tell me the truth, are you doing well?"

"Not too badly for a beginner," replied Mr. Sewell cheerily.

"I shall double the fee that I offered," replied Cecil.

"No, you will not," returned Sewell firmly; "you shall give me that fee, which for the work proposed is not too high—any one else will charge as much—and you may place at my disposal the sum that I calculate will cover everything; that is, if you choose to trust me so far."

"You shall have a blank cheque at once," said Cecil eagerly.

"Nothing of the sort, you will receive a properly drawn out amount, allowing a small margin for accidents, and that sum you will send me, but not one cent more—I shall only return it if you do," said the lawyer quietly.

Cecil looked at him for a moment, then with a shrug of the shoulders said carelessly :

"If you will not take help, it is not my business to force it on you, John, though I would have given it willingly for old sake's sake."

And as John Sewell walked home he thought regretfully that his pride had stood in his way, and he felt half sorry ; but then, recovering his more natural tone of mind, he was glad that he had not taken advantage of a mere generous momentary impulse, and had acted up to his ideas of honesty and honour.

The yacht was many leagues from land, and Mr. Sewell had taken his last instructions a week since, and was awaiting the next move in the game, when he was surprised by a visit from a respectable man, who informed him that his new office was quite ready for occupation.

"Mine?" exclaimed Mr. Sewell ; "this is some mistake."

"Nothing can be plainer," replied the stranger ; "it is taken in your name, rent paid in advance for three years ; if you don't occupy I guess it will stand empty. Here is the letter of instructions."

John tore it open eagerly and read :

"DEAR OLD CHUM,—I have a fancy to own an office, but cannot look after it just now, so trust to your doing so ; don't fail me, but keep it aired.—CECIL."

Without another word John caught up his hat and accompanied the messenger to the address given. The office was admirable in every respect—position, arrangement, and fitting—and on the table lay four letters of introduction to some of the most influential men of the profession, and, better still, two briefs.

Cecil had not forgotten old times, and with almost passionate gratitude in his heart, John vowed that he would not prove himself unworthy.

The evidence of a divorce case is not specially edifying, but as

the matter ended quickly, and scandalous folks felt rather de-
[]-auded of an anticipated treat.

Morton Yardley pocketed a very substantial sum as damages, and not being of sensitive fibre, spent it on his newest divinity. A provincial mayoress eloped with a costermonger, and this proved so sensational, as she was the daughter of a German baron, that the Yardley case was forgotten even more speedily than usual.

Two yachts lay side by side in the loveliest of tiny harbours, where great palm trees, broad-leaved bananas, and a thicket of flowering shrubs reflected their luxuriant beauty in the still water, and a tangled mass of gorgeous creepers ran from bough to bough and hung down in long garlands, which trailed on the rippling waves beneath.

An ideal paradise where the cares and interests of the world could be forgotten in impossible dreams of a life to be passed in a tropical Eden, by two whose thoughts should never stray to wider horizons, but be for ever concentrated on each other.

Hidden from prying eyes, behind a wealth of leaf and blossom, a tiny boat rocked gently on the baby wavelets of the flowing tide, in it were two, a man and a woman; and the hush of the silent afternoon hour brought only unrest to them both, though the one showed it not at all, and the other only in the quick, jerky fashion in which he rolled cigarettes between his strong, brown fingers.

A very different type of manhood to Morton Yardley, whose good looks even in boyhood showed a certain trace of the nature which in its cruel sensuality had snatched at Erica as a thoughtless lad tears a lovely white lily from its stem, to tire of it and crush it a little later.

Dick Hamilton, younger son of a good old family, bore the stamp of Eton and Oxford training, and had the unmistakeable look of a well-bred Englishman, not specially handsome, perhaps, but still very good to look at, with a kindly smile and eyes and voice that softened when he spoke to a woman or a child.

He had left home to seek his fortune, and being of the lucky ones of the earth, chanced to save the life of a rich man's only child at great risk to himself, and thus got a start in life which enabled him to get on so rapidly that he was already wealthy

enough to keep the yacht which now lay at anchor by the side of Cecil Ringwood's boat, and from the state room of that same "Sea Swallow," the owner, who was supposed by the two under the shady creepers to be passing the hot drowsy hours in a siesta, was vainly endeavouring with eager, jealous eyes to see through into the shady nook that sheltered them.

The pair who were so wrapt in their own visions that all besides seemed a matter of indifference to them, were after all but slightly divided by a fragile screen from the rest of the world, and presently a great blue, velvety butterfly fluttered in and rested on Erica's white forehead.

"Good luck," she said merrily. "So Mammie Dinah who brings the fruit says: 'A butterfly means joy,' and I do so want to be quite happy," she added half to herself with a little sigh, and her soft lips quivered like those of a sorrowful child.

Dick's self-control, previously strained to the very utmost, suddenly gave way, as he saw the sweet eyes fill with unbidden tears.

He threw himself at her feet, forgetting how frail their little boat was, and pouring out words of the most passionate endearment, he covered her slender hands with kisses, imploring her to speak the words that would make him happy, for he loved her, and had loved her since first they met; he had but waited to give her time to know him better; she must know that he loved her fondly, truly; he repeated himself as lovers have done from time immemorial, and will go on doing.

For a moment Erica yielded in silence to his caresses, her eyes met his, her lips parted as if to answer him fondly, and then with an abrupt movement she drew back sharply, repulsing him decidedly.

Startled by the sudden change Dick remained silent, then exclaimed, "Erica, my sweet! my darling! what is it now? have I offended you? surely not in begging you to be my wife!"

"You do me an honour," she replied, in a strange, forced, toneless voice; "but I cannot marry you."

"Why not?" pleaded Dick; "I can give you all that you could ask; I am not poor, and I never asked any other woman to marry me. Erica! Erica! my heart's darling, trust yourself to me."

"I cannot marry you," she reiterated, gravely and quietly.

Dick grew very pale and gazed at her in amazement.

"Erica, you have deceived me," he replied firmly, but gently. "When you consented this afternoon to come here with me, surely you knew why I wanted you all alone."

Erica hesitated, then replied :

"I do not wish to deceive you. I did know—it was best—for you, for—for both of us to have it over ; let it be a secret between us, and row me back, please, to the 'Sea Swallow.'"

"Not yet," returned Hamilton. "You owe me some explanation, Erica, and I will have it too. I do not believe that you dislike me."

Had he looked at the fair face, which was all too expressive, no answer would have been needed, but with eyes fixed on her tightly clasped hands, he went on, "Tell me the truth, Erica, do you not like me?"

"I like you," she said coldly enough, but the slight fingers looking as if in agony betrayed her secret.

"Erica, my darling!" Dick exclaimed with sudden eagerness, "you are keeping back the truth ; as you will answer when all secrets are revealed, do you love me?"

For one instant she tried to lie to him but failed, then rising slowly and gracefully, steadying her tall, slim figure by grasping the creepers, she answered simply, "I do love you, Dick, but I cannot marry you," and without another word she stepped from the boat to the shore, and would have left him, but he sprang after her and snatching her up swung her back into the boat. "My God, child!" he cried, "there is a coral snake, do not be so foolish ; surely to escape from me you need not risk an awful death."

Erica, who had a horror of snakes, trembled violently as she realized her danger, and Dick, taking up the light oars, with a stroke or two ran the boat from under the shadow of the foliage, and though his companion begged in a half-hearted way to be taken back straight to the yacht, he made for the mouth of the harbour, pulling vigorously till they were clear of the little landlocked bay, and out where the evening breeze blew soft and fresh over the blue expanse of ocean.

The sun was sinking in a glorious mass of brilliantly coloured clouds, across which a bar of deepest purple showed in sharp contrast and ominously ; the tall, feathery palms which crowned a small islet stood out intensely green, and the white coralline

strand beneath them was hard and clear as if cut out of alabaster. A flock of screaming gaudy parrots flew over them, and some native boats rowed by, the dark-skinned, grinning oarsmen and girls chattering, gesticulating, and holding up strange fish and fruit which they wanted to sell.

The unfamiliar scene gave Erica a strange feeling of unreality, though the minutest details were unconsciously printed on her brain, to haunt her when Dick's eager voice no longer sounded in her ears, like part of the dream in which she seemed to herself a passive spectator, not a woman to whom a man was pleading for his life's happiness; all that she felt clear about was that at any cost she must reiterate her negative, to no other form of words could she trust herself, and in dull, monotonous tones she continued to repeat, "I cannot, cannot marry you, Dick," feeling all the time that her strength ebbed with the words, and the darkness as of night was closing on them both.

At last, like a scared child longing for home in a strange place, she began to cry silently and piteously, till Dick, moved by her white tear-stained cheeks, suddenly laid a tender, kindly hand on her trembling ones, saying, "My poor little girl, don't, don't cry like that, you are overdone, dear; I will row you back at once, and when you are rested to-morrow you shall tell me all about it. Trust me, darling, I will not say a word now to worry you."

He took up his oars, and rowed on silently and steadily, only pausing once to buy some lovely fragrant white flowers from an old woman's canoe, with which he filled Erica's lap.

They soon reached the yacht, and with a tender, firm pressure of her hand he helped her on board, and left her.

Erica hastily went below and with the usual feminine impulse made straight for her little state room, there to fling herself down on her berth, and give way to a storm of sobs which shook her from head to foot, and which she did her best to stifle by burying her face on the pillow. She did not hear the door open, but presently was pulled up by no gentle touch from the pillow, and found herself confronted by Cecil Ringwood, whose lips were set and eyes flashing with anger.

"What is all this, Erica? But I need not ask," said Cecil sternly. "In spite of all warnings you have let Dick Hamilton make love to you, and now like a baby you are crying for the

moon. Pray, have you broken your word, and explained matters to him? May I ask?"

"Of course, not," replied Erica, with momentary indignation. "But oh, Cecil, Cecil, I am so miserable, you might be kind to me."

"Kind!" retorted Cecil bitterly, "I should not think there are many who would have done for you all that I have, and now you call me unkind!"

Erica began to sob again and said meekly, "Do forgive me, Cecil—I know—I know, dear, how good you have been—and all—but what was I to do? Dick loves me—he is coming for my answer to-morrow—he would not take a refusal, and—and——"

"And I may go to the wall, Erica. I have served my turn, and am of no more use to you," returned Cecil; "cast aside for a lover whom you have known so short a time; so be it."

The bitter words told of sharp pain and a proud, disappointed spirit which would not bend at any cost. Both Cecil and Erica were utterly miserable and did not understand each other, but Erica's was the more yielding nature.

"Only tell me what to do," she said; "my brain seems stupefied and I cannot think any more."

"You have not thought to much purpose at all, it seems to me," retorted Cecil sharply; "what I see you want me to say is, Go to Dick's arms, regardless of consequences, to—any one. What I do say is, that if you have any sense of right and wrong, if you really care for that man or for me, you will cut through the tangle that cannot be unravelled, and go."

"Go! where to?" said Erica, sitting up and looking bewildered.

"There is a mail steamer to be caught at a port thirty miles away to-morrow. The launch would get you to her in less than four hours," replied Cecil quietly.

Erica looked straight into her companion's eyes for a few moments, then, as if a sudden light had broken on her, she said, very simply, but firmly:

"I will go, since you think it best."

Her unexpected capitulation so touched Cecil that the latter almost persuaded Erica to stay, or suggested that they would both go, but at that instant the steward knocked with some message and the yielding moment passed.

The necessary arrangements for the launch were made, and

just as Dick Hamilton, after a night of feverish restlessness, fell into a sound morning sleep, the smart little launch was alongside, and Erica, hastily descending the gangway, stepped on to her, and was far away before Dick awoke, to commence a new chapter in her troubled life.

* * * *

The gay strains of a glorious band were ringing out a seductive waltz, and a brilliantly dressed company, all carefully masked, swung lightly over the polished floor to its strains.

A grand masquerade was in progress, given by the governor of one of our small islands in honour of some dignity or another ; outside in the tropical darkness the gardens were gay with lamps which quite put the fireflies in the shade.

A tall, well-built man, who had been waltzing incessantly with a slender girl in Spanish dress, paused near an open window, then with a word to his partner, went out of the hot ball-room into the cooler scented night.

"How perfectly you waltz !" he said to the girl, whose dark flashing eyes and dainty little chin were alone visible.

"Your voice seems familiar, too."

"Perhaps it is," replied the lady. "You are too constant to one, though, to think much of others."

Her companion started a little.

"What do you know of me ?" he asked hastily.

"I know that you are wasting your life in a vain dream. You will never wed the one you sigh for," said the girl quietly.

"Why not ?" cried the man eagerly. "Where is she ? For God's sake, tell me, if you know. She left me without a word, but——"

"But perhaps she could not speak that word. How was she living when you knew her ? Her husband is not dead. Did she tell you nothing of her past life ?" asked the Spaniard. "Yours is a good old name, Mr. Hamilton. Will you risk all for love—even a stain on it ?"

A cold, strange dread kept Dick silent for a moment ; his companion carelessly turned away to smell some fragrant jessamine blossoms, but, recovering himself, Dick seized her slender wrists. "You drive me mad !" he exclaimed. "Where is she ? I will know."

"If I knew, possibly I might tell you, but I do not, so you need

not break my wrists," replied his partner. "Are there no other beautiful, faithful women in the world with a past on which no shadow of a doubt rests?"

"Not for me," said Dick. "At least not till I have seen her again, and made sure that all hope is over."

"Oh, miracle of manhood!" laughed the slim Spaniard saucily. "What constancy! And is she another paragon of all charms and virtues?"

"But you know her?" said Dick in a doubtful voice.

The girl's laughter rang out mockingly:

"Oh, Solomon! I heard some vague rumours, and you have told me the rest. No, don't be angry, life is so short, so sad; let us be happy, and dance while we may. Will you not ask me? Too much offended—Ah, just one little turn to make friends."

The seductive voice, with its varying sweet intonations, was irresistible. Dick might love one woman, but he was young still, and could feel the attractions of another as *piquante* as his unknown partner. In another moment they were gliding together in that seductive harmony peculiar to two perfect dancers whose steps suit. After all, life is short, let us gather its roses; and as the night went on the reaction from a long spell of uncertainty, pain, and doubt began to inspire Dick, his voice softened, and he began to think with regret of the parting.

Unmasking was not *de rigueur*, and his companion retained her little black velvet disguise. She might have had scores of partners, but, apparently careless of public opinion, gave Dick all the waltzes till the rooms began to thin, and then she bade him find her carriage.

"May I not see you to-morrow?" he whispered, as they parted lingeringly, and with a slight accent of triumph she gave the required permission.

Dick fancied himself not of an inconstant temper, and in very truth he still loved Erica, but before a fortnight was out the lovely heroine of the masquerade had cast her chains about him, and he was unconsciously drifting down the stream as she willed. He knew now that they had met before; he had not been attracted then, but now her undercurrent of suggestion gradually insinuated the thought that he was after all a fool to pursue a will-o'-the-wisp when at hand was a creature of flesh and blood, clever, brilliant, handsome, and well inclined to listen if he

wooded. She was rich too and independent, so his money was no attraction to her, and her duenna, being a somewhat deaf old lady of good position, never interfered in the smallest degree with her high-spirited guest's arrangements—she settled everything to please herself.

So Dick went early and stayed late, enjoying to the full the delicious privileges of what he fancied a platonic friendship, till one day his eyes were opened by the sudden announcement that his charming friend was going away, and as she told him this in their favourite seat under a great shady palm, with her pretty head very near to him, he turned suddenly, and printing a dozen kisses on the rich tempting lips, exclaimed :

“ My darling, stay with me ! Be my wife ! ”

“ Do you love me ? ” she whispered softly. “ Better than you loved her—or at least as well ? ”

Dick hesitated. Even in that moment he could not lie, and said gently :

“ My love for you is different, my sweet one ; you are a very sorceress. Give yourself to me, dearest, and I swear that you shall never regret it. I shall be your slave for life.”

And though the words were accompanied by kisses, his betrothed sighed even as she held up her face to him, for in her passionate, jealous heart she felt that her rival had triumphed, and was better loved than ever she could be, and she longed above all things to be his dearest, the one woman in all the world to him.

But still he was a charming and attentive lover, and she could find no fault with him, for in public he was so courteous and attentive, in private he showed her so much affection, that a more easily contented woman would have thought him one of a thousand and deemed herself a fortunate being ; but this girl had too keen perceptions, and was too passionately fond of him not to detect that the gold did not ring true though he honestly believed that it did.

The Dead Sea fruit was turning to ashes on her lips, but still she could not by her own act drive him from her, and perhaps she fancied that in time her devotion must win a full, free return from the man she held so dear.

There was no need to delay the marriage long ; the extent of her wealth startled Dick, who had enough of his own, however, to prove him no mercenary fortune-hunter.

The settlements were drawn up in liberal fashion, though Dick would not allow his betrothed to shower gold on him recklessly, and engaged her lawyer, a grave, sensible young man, to uphold him in this determination.

The days flew, and when under the glamour of his future wife's bewitching ways, and the loveliness which she knew so well how to set off, Dick gave himself up to the seductive influence, and believed that he loved her to distraction, but when he was alone or in the darkness of the night, a sudden conviction would come to him that he was but the slave of passion, and that all that was truest and best in his nature was only to be roused by the tall, fair, sad-eyed woman to whom he had given his first and real love far away among the isles of the Pacific.

He tried to steel himself, but in vain, by believing her a frail creature whose unfaithfulness had caused her husband to cast her off, but the sweet, piteous eyes haunted him, and he felt that no sin of hers could have parted them had she willed it otherwise ; but she had left him heartlessly, cruelly, he said to himself, and now another woman, whose truth and purity he could not doubt, had staked her happiness on his love, and he would prove himself grateful for so rare a gift. And there, as a sort of salve to his conscience, he ended generally by going out and buying jewels to lavish on her, and she loved the gifts for the giver's sake.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one, neither Hamilton nor his bride elect had any intimate friends in the colony, to which both had drifted rather by chance than otherwise, but for even the simplest of marriages some little preparations are necessary ; and for a day or two before the eventful one, Dick found himself rather in the way than otherwise when he went to see his *fiancée*, so he frequented the club a great deal more than usual, and was turning over the papers when he heard a familiar name mentioned as one man said to another.

"So Yardley's dead ; you remember him—owned Golden Rain you know—a good mare she is too. Smithson gave £900 for her and brought her over here."

"Yardley, Morton Yardley ?" said the other man, who was an Englishman visiting the colony. "Yes, I knew him—bad lot—never liked the fellow—he had a very pretty wife, but she bolted. No one pitied Yardley, he treated her badly."

"Well," said the first speaker, "he's dead now, dog-cart accident—always drove wild brutes. There is a paragraph about him and his history in *Verity*, or one of those papers—come and have a drink."

They sauntered out, and Dick went to the table and looked for the paper in question. Erica was nothing to him now, he thought, but he would just see what was said. Would she care for this man's death, he wondered. He soon found what he wanted, and began to read leisurely; but suddenly, with an exclamation of surprise, he sprang up as if shot, and stood wildly gazing at the paper as if unable to believe his eyes; then, crushing his hat on, hastily he tore out of the club, past the astonished porter and several loungers, who stared blankly, and calling up his dog-cart, drove off at racing pace, heedless of appearances, to the pretty house on the outskirts, where his arrival was usually so welcome.

This time he came in no lover-like mood, but striding in to the rooms without any greeting, put the paper into the hands of the girl who had run in joyously to meet him, and pointing out the paragraph that had so moved him said sternly:

"If I am not mad, and dreaming that these facts are stated, what explanation do you give? Is there another Cecil Ringwood, or what does this extraordinary statement mean? 'Mr. Morton Yardley was married to Erica, only daughter of Major Leicester of the Engineers, but divorced her when she left him for Mr. Cecil Ringwood of New York.'"

"It is a mistake," faltered the girl. "At least—oh, Dick, don't look at me so angrily. What does this paper matter? You say they are all lies, these stupid society things."

With a quick little movement she was beside him twining her arms about him, but he put her from him saying, "By the heaven above us, Cecil, I will have the truth from your lips; I am beginning to see that I have been fooled; take care, I am desperate, half-mad with the uncertainty as to who is true and who is false. With whom did Erica Yardley leave her home? Answer me."

There was a dead silence only broken by a gasping sob from the girl, who stood like a deer at bay.

Dick marched to the window and took up a field glass from the table.

"I see," he said coolly, "that the steamer starts for England in an hour or so by the signals, I shall go by her and unravel this cursed plot."

Without another word he was going, but Cecil sprang forward and laid her hand on his arm.

"You may spare yourself the trouble. I and I, perhaps, alone can tell you all. Erica and I were schoolfellows, and the dearest friends. She married a man who proved a brute and a black-guard. I guessed the law was all on his side, so I just stole that poor child out of his clutches. Well, then, it seemed that in your straitlaced old country she could only be freed by seeming core bad. The good women must lay themselves out to suffer. So I dressed as a man and took her to a London hotel; and, as I surmised, Yardley made little investigation. He sucked down the dollars like a greedy fish. He could have pricked the bubble easily had he cared to do so. And my lawyer, John Sewell, managed the rest. When you met us yachting together it was all blown over and forgotten."

"And why, in heaven's name, could you not tell me this at first, instead of letting me believe that poor innocent girl a deservedly cast-off wife?" said Dick harshly. "And where is she now?"

"I do not know," said Cecil sullenly; "she was in England." Then, after a pause, the strain proved too much for her, and she burst into bitter weeping, sobbing out:

"Oh, Dick, Dick! why are you so hard on me? I loved you so from the first, and you could not have married her. She was not really divorced, you know; and I thought if she went it was best for her, and that you would love me in time. But I see now that you never cared for me, and oh! you can go to her; don't waste time!"

Poor Dick was sorely perplexed by Cecil's extraordinary confession. He could not be indifferent to the girl who was to have been his bride so soon, and was so loving and so lovely; but for all that he knew that he was wildly happy to feel that nothing now need part him from Erica, his own love—his pearl of women.

He stood hesitating, bewildered, not knowing what to say or do; but Cecil's mood changed suddenly. Springing up from the sofa that she had thrown herself on in her outburst of sorrow, she swept by him and rang the bell sharply. The servant came promptly, and in sharp commanding tones Cecil said, "Order Mr. Hamilton's dog-cart at once; and you will not admit him again." Then, as the astonished servant stood aghast, she stamped her

foot, saying, "Go directly ; what are you waiting for ?" Then, with a laugh that was sadder than tears, she said to Hamilton : "I guess the best woman in the world could not have fixed it off neater for you, Dick ! Good-bye." Her voice quavered on the last word, but the dog-cart was announced, and with an imperial gesture she rejected his hand. The eager servant felt sure that they had quarrelled, and flew off to spread the news ; and Hamilton, deeply grateful to be gone, yet thought sadly of the girl who had loved him so well, and he remembered her till he reached London, and wondered how to find Erica Yardley without a clue. Being a man of sense as well as action, he went to Mr. Yardley's lawyers, and one of them, an elderly man, suggested that at her own old home something would be known. "There is always an old nurse or some such body," he added.

Dick Hamilton, too restless to wait, determined to go himself ; and driving from the nearest station about seven miles off, found himself landed at a primitive inn, where he supposed some diplomacy might be required to lead up to the subject of his search. So he ordered dinner, and went for a stroll in the little street. Passing through the old churchyard, he wandered on, careless of his road, so engrossed was he in his thoughts, when suddenly he came to a little gate with a neatly cut hedge on either side, framing a tiny garden and a small cottage wreathed with flowers, and sitting on the grass plot, with a book in her hand, under a great fuchsia bush, was Erica.

The landlady of the Green Dragon wasted much time and trouble over the plump chicken destined for Mr. Hamilton's refreshment, for he did not reappear till four hours after he was due ; but when the good-hearted but irascible dame found out what had delayed him he was freely pardoned ; for Erica had a staunch friend in the sturdy, good woman, who, through good and evil report, had always been faithful to the girl whom she had nursed as a wee toddler still crying for her dead mother and that bright home so different to the dark, dreary hall.

* * * * *

Once again Cecil Ringwood sat facing Mr. Sewell, but his office was now as comfortable as any man could desire. He had made good use of the start put in his way by Cecil, and talent, work, and mother wit did the rest. He was now a rising man in good position, and earning a handsome income.

A long hour's work was concluded, for Cecil's property entailed a great deal of correspondence, and it was not very often that he could make her give steady attention to her business matters, but at last the papers were locked up and the lawyer said, "And now, Cecil, am I to congratulate you on being selected as the future Duchesse de Paramé?"

"No," returned Cecil coldly. "No amount of French polish seems just what I want to get in exchange for the cost of silver-plating that young man's coronet. I guess I am not so ugly but a little affection might be thrown in, and he offered none."

"Many men have loved you, Cecil; you are hard to please," said John.

"That is so, perhaps," she answered carelessly. "John, I wish you and I were back in the old clearing where the striped squirrels ran about. Life was better somehow then. Do you remember the huckleberry jam and the doughnuts? and the fun we had at apple bees and hay frolics?" She did not look at Sewell as she chattered on about the past, but suddenly his composure gave way.

"Cecil!" he said hastily, "don't go on so, don't, child. I can't stand it. We are not children now. I am just your man of business, and—and—— Oh! my darling, I must tell you just once. I have loved you all my life, since you were a darling bare-legged baby." He tried hard to speak the last words jestingly, but the pain was too sharp. He choked over it, and had to stop for a minute, then went on, "Don't worry, dear, do not think of it again. I never meant to tell you; forget it, and think of me only as your useful servant, who is always ready to do your bidding."

"Well," said Cecil gravely, "you can begin to draw up some more settlements. I am thinking of getting married before long."

"Yes," replied John bravely, in business-like tones, "shall I take your instructions now? Do I know the happy man?"

"Possibly; at any rate you may judge for yourself—here, catch," and Cecil threw a tiny silver case to him.

John opened it, and started up eagerly, the little mirror within showing him his own likeness.

"Cecil! Cecil! My darling, darling girl. Oh! do not deceive me even in play. I could go on as I was, but you do not know one quarter of my love for you. Is it really true?"

And for all answer the girl that he had loved so long and so

hopelessly, as he thought, let him fold her in his arms, and her restless, unsatisfied craving for love was stilled once and for ever by her old playmate's passionate tender devotion.

In one of the loveliest states of America, Erica Hamilton and Dick had a charming house, commanding glorious views over mountains, woods, and a broad river. They called it a summer house, but spent a great part of the year there, for they were by no means cut off from their fellow creatures, and during the holiday season gay parties of friends visited them frequently from a great hotel which was within a short drive.

The road leading to their house could be seen from the verandah, and Erica coming in one morning from her garden with a great basket of roses saw a carriage evidently on its way to their abode.

"Dick! here are some good folks coming to lunch," she cried gaily, putting her head into his smoking-room window.

"All right, I have just done. I dare say it's the Brownriggs or Mustertons," he replied. "I'll just get out some more wine."

His hospitable cares delayed him for a few moments. He heard the carriage drive up, and returned to the verandah, which was Erica's favourite place of reception, to come face to face with Cecil and a stranger. Her bright eyes gleamed with fire as she noted his embarrassment and surprise, but she passed him by, and running up to Erica gave her an eager hug, saying merrily, "None of your British starch, Erica, child, it's no use; I am the sinner that repenteth, and as I surmise this is a little heaven on earth, it's your business to rejoice tenfold over me."

Erica needed little pressing. After a moment's hesitation she returned the embrace as heartily as it was given, and then Cecil turned back to Dick with outstretched hand. "Shake, Dick," she said; "I mean to be friends, so just give in quick. This is my husband, John Sewell, and he knows, and I daresay Erica there knows, that I was head under in love with you once, but I would not have you at a gift now. John has been in love with me since we were two naughty little urchins garter high, and he is the right man for me. So come now, Dick, let's shake," and they shook with a will, too.

For after all what is the good of quarrelling with a very pretty girl because she was in love with you—especially if your wife and her husband do not mind?

A Whiff of Perfume.

SWEET scents which please the sense of smell have been sought and loved from earliest times. They were the delight of the Hebrews, and in hourly requisition in their private life and in their public services. Equally were they a means of pleasure to the fastidious Greek. Homer speaks of them in terms of high praise :

“ Spirit divine whose exaltation greets
The sense of gods with more than mortal sweets.”

His heroes were fragrant with odorant ointments. Odysseus of the brave heart used rich unguents wherewith to anoint his limbs, and the goddesses were so generous in their gifts of perfumed oils, that his skin became silken and divine as that of the gods themselves. His heroines, though women of strong minds, were not averse to the use of those arts which add charm to the person and pleasure to the senses. Daily they smoothed out all creases with fragrant ointments ; their hair they made glossy with unctuous perfumes. Their chests of linen, their embroidered robes, their furniture had the sweet scent of flowers. The floors of their dwellings they cooled by sprinkling perfumed water, and at the porticos hung bunches of aromatic herbs.

The wealthier Greeks and Romans carried unguents and perfumes about with them in small boxes of costly material and exquisite workmanship.

Masusius, the Roman knight, poor, but learned ; Anacreon, the wise and illustrious ; and Alexis, the comic poet, agree that perfumes soothe and invigorate the brain. The latter says :

“ The best recipe for health
Is to apply sweet scents unto the brain.”
“ His nose he anoints, and thinks it plain,
’Tis good for health with scents to feed the brain.”

The ancients believed the breast to be the seat of the soul, hence they frequently anointed that part of the body, especially before worship, as an oblation, and after any act of defilement as a means of purification. The head they mollified with unguents, to prevent dryness, which has a withering effect on the hair ; and to give elasticity to the skin and counteract the effects of the sun, the whole body they habitually rubbed with oleaginous essences.

Thus the original object of applying unguents was to preserve the health and suppleness of the body. But in later times the major use of perfumes was to diffuse redolence and render the appearance more pleasant.

Democritus, the celebrated philosopher of Abdera, was highly pleased to moisten his "inward parts with fragrant honey, and his outward with rich unguents."

The complimentary bath which the Greeks provided for their guests was invariably followed by much unctuous rubbing and anointing with scented oils. When this people had attained its high level of civilization, as well as being most lavish, it was most exact in its use of perfumes. A special scent was reserved for anointing each part of the body. This is illustrated in some lines of Antiphanes, a comic poet of Smyrna :

"He really bathes

In a large gilded tub, and steeps his feet

And legs in rich Egyptian unguents.

His jaws and breast he rubs with thick palm oil,

And both his arms with extract sweet of mint.

His eyebrows and his hair with marjoram,

His knees and neck with essence of ground thyme."

The Greeks were specially fond of figures and symbols, and perhaps this particularizing is symbolical, and there is a vestige of superstition lurking within it.

Many of the ancient physicians, among them Criton and Hippocrates, used perfumes medicinally, and prescribed them largely for nervous diseases. One reveals to us that "perfume made from roses is suitable for drinking parties, and that made from myrtles and apples good for the stomach and for lethargic persons"

Oleaginous ointments, fragrant lotions, and sweet essences were supposed to have a wonderfully healing power. The Africans inhale aromatic vapours as a cure for malignant fever ; and in the time of Queen Elizabeth they were counted a preventative against the plague. It is related that "during the great plague of Marseilles, four robbers invented an aromatic vinegar, by means of which they could rob the stricken without fear of infection."

On the day of Epiphany, instituted in honour of the Magi, a curious ceremony was performed, which ended by the carrying

round of a chafing dish, with burning frankincense, and the odour was sniffed by the household to keep off disease.

Frankincense has superior medicinal qualities, and is considered an antidote to hemlock. Avicenna, the Arabian physician, advised it as a cure for tumours, ulcers, and such like. The Turks esteem a poultice made of the leaves of the jasmine a safe remedy for the bite of a snake.

The food of the gods in the Greek Olympus is described as sweeter than honey, and of a most luscious fragrance. Also it was a restorative. Apollo, in the *Iliad*, saves the body of Sarpedonis from putrefaction by the application of ambrosia. In the *Æneid* Venus heals the wounds of her son by this perfumed food; and it is said that Bernice wife of Ptolemy Soter, tasted of it and was saved from death. The goddesses used it for the toilet, when they wished to appear specially captivating—Juno, when she adorned herself to meet Jupiter; Venus, when she presented herself to Æneas; and Psyche, when her heart palpitated at the coming of Cupid.

The Epicureans thought that perfume mixed with their wine enabled them to drink more plentifully, without leaving ill effects. Not the Epicureans only, but the Bacchantes mingled honey and a fragrant infusion of flowers in their wine cups. In the East, perfumed sherbets are much appreciated, as well as highly-scented cakes and lozenges.

Some insist, however, that perfumes have an evil effect upon certain constitutions. One writer affirms that if perfumes are too concentrated "they may give rise to serious symptoms, to convulsions and spasms or even death."

Plants with white blossoms have a larger proportion of fragrance. Lilac, heliotrope, myrtle, violet, lily of the valley, mignonette, and the pale rose furnish very sweet and choice perfumes. One of the most delicious of scents, and the only floral perfume which cannot be imitated, is the jasmine, or Persian "*yásmín*." It is greatly prized in the East, and referred to by Persian and Arabian poets. A variety of this flower, known as "*moogree*," is held sacred to Vishnu, and largely used in the Hindu religious ceremonies. Among the prospective delights of the Hindu paradise are the prodigality of rich perfumes and the gardens of jasmine and lilies. In Turkey the wood of the jasmine is made into long pipes, which are valued for their

aroma. The Chinese use the flower for scenting tea. An acre of land is computed to yield about five hundred pounds of flowers during a season. This is valued at from £25 to £35.

Perfumes are procured in several ways. From the wood, such as sandal; from the bark, as cinnamon; from the leaves, as patchouli; from the flowers, as rose; from the fruit, as citron; and from the seeds, as almond.

The resin is obtained by three methods. Either by distilling with water that part of the plant which contains the perfume; or by expression; that is, paring off the outer covering of the bark, leaf, or fruit, &c., placing the parings in a muslin bag and squeezing in a hydraulic press, then separating it from the water by a funnel, and filtering. The third way is by maceration, or infusing the flowers in heated fat or rectified spirits of wine.

The mixing and compounding of perfumes is an art requiring much care and experience. Dr. Septimus Piesse endeavoured to show that a scale existed among odours, as among sounds, and classified them to correspond with notes. One false note of odour, he says, like one false note of sound, will destroy the harmony.

In ancient days, sweet odours were obtained by burning aromatic gums and woods. Hence the word perfume, which is from the Latin *per*, through, *fumus*, smoke or vapour. From this arose the idea of incense in primitive worship. It was used by the Orientals long before it became known to the Western world. People of the East utilized it for sacrifice in their temples. At feasts it enhanced the pleasure of the senses. At funerals it was a bribe to appease the manes of the dead; and later, in theatres, a disinfectant against the unpleasant odours of a crowded building.

Pliny assures us that incense was not employed in sacrifice until after the Trojan war, when fragrant woods were applied to give an agreeable smell.

In an ancient magical MS. it is directed that three grains should be taken, with three fingers, and placed under the threshold to keep away evil spirits, which might come in the form of offensive odours.

Rue is called the "herb of grace," because it was supposed to have power over sprites and evil demons. In the early churches, as an emblem of remembrance and grace, it was used to sprinkle

holy water upon the congregation, to exorcise evil spirits, and as a recourse against hysteria and convulsions.

On the altars of Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, and in the temples of Egypt, India, China, Greece and Rome, incense ascended in sweet vapours as a perpetual memorial.

Perfumes were mingled with the sacrifices. Temples were adorned with fragrant flowers and aromatic herbs. And one of the most important personages in the ceremonies was the anointer. He purified the temple, all the furniture and utensils, and the people, by the sprinkling of consecrated perfumes. In many cases he was compounder, and held the mysteries of the many redolent and innocuous preparations employed in religious worship.

Yearly, the Arabs brought as a tribute to Darius a thousand talents of incense. And Herodotus relates that this quantity was annually burned by the Chaldeans on the altar of Bel at Babylon.

At Paphos, the famous city of Cyprus, on the hundred altars of Venus, Arabian frankincense was daily consumed. The votaries of Mercury, the holder of secrets, sprinkled themselves generously with perfumes; their bodies they made sweet with unguents, and gay with wreaths of laurel leaves. The god, radiant and proud, holds in one hand a purse, emblematic of his interest in merchandise; a cock on his wrist, a sign of vigilance; at his feet a goat, a scorpion and a fly; one foot rests upon a tortoise. Milk and honey are first offered, a symbol of the sweetness and smoothness of his speech. The tongues of animals are then thrown into the burning incense, a token of the god's eloquence, which can prevail over everything.

The Greeks being especially sensitive to beauty and sweetness in every form, and believing all beautiful things to be divine gifts, they consecrated their noblest and fairest works to the gods, and prominent amongst their various tributes were perfumes of rare fragrance and costly essences. In nearly all their sacrificial offerings some of these were employed. If for animal sacrifice, which was offered in the open air, a pile of aromatic woods was arranged upon the altar; on this the victim was laid, decked with flowers. The woods were lighted, and the flames fed by oils and ointments of sweet aroma, and round were scattered scented herbs sacred to the deity.

In ceremonies connected with the famous Eleusinian mysteries which were specially noted for their magnificence and secret rites, where excitement, rapt devotion and night wandering much heightened the effect, perfumes were lavishly used. Maidens before marching in procession were purified by the sprinkling of consecrated perfume. On their brows they wore garlands of sweet flowers and crowns of myrtle. They washed their hands in scented water, and carried baskets of nosegays and wafers.

In the Eastern paradise, as in the Greek, bowers of heavy blossoms diffuse their rich redolence ; refreshing dew bathes the face with fragrance ; fountains of dashing spray weep odorous essences ; and rivers of priceless attars flow round the celestial city.

Frankincense is the purest of all incense ; it is a gum resin from an Arabian terebinth. To obtain this, a deep incision is made in the trunk, and below it a narrow strip of bark peeled off ; when the exudation has hardened the incision is deepened. In about three months the resin has acquired a sufficient degree of consistency. It is gathered in large quantities and packed in goat skins. It was formerly believed that the trees which yielded frankincense were infested by winged serpents, and the only way to be rid of them, and to get at the treasure, was by burning gum styrax, an odoriferous balsam of aromatic smell. Frankincense was forbidden to be used for embalming, as it was sacred to sacrificial purposes. The Israelites were strictly prohibited from compounding it.

Now it is used largely in Roman Catholic and High Church ceremonies. The thurible is swung, the incense burns with a bright white flame, the choir chants its hymns of petition and penitence, and the song and the perfume arise together.

In the time of St. Silvester, the Emperor Constantine made an offering in the basilica of St. Marcellinus and St. Peter at Rome of a hundred pounds weight of frankincense.

The best quality is exported from Africa ; an inferior kind is found on the mountains of India.

Myrrh, which was fabulously supposed to be the tears of Myrrha, who was turned into a shrub, was a plant of handsome appearance, with spreading, fern-like foliage and large umbels of white flowers. It was found principally in Arabia and Abyssinia. In early times the perfume distilled from it was greatly in requisition for embalming.

Herodotus gives a detailed account of the ancient mode of embalming, which is perhaps more instructive than pleasing. After the body had undergone much preparation, which, to spare your feelings, I will not describe, it was filled with powdered myrrh, cassia, and other perfumes. It was then steeped in natron, a strong solution of soda, for seventy days. After this, it was wrapped in bands of fine perfumed linen, smeared with aromatic gums.

Not only people were thus embalmed, but the crocodiles of Lake Moeris, which, after their mummification, were decorated with ornaments and jewels, and laid in one of the subterranean passages of the great Labyrinth with much pomp and display. The sacred cat, ichneumon, and other cherished animals devoutly worshipped by the Egyptians, were embalmed with scrupulous and fanatical care. On days special to the memory of the dead, the mummies were newly sprinkled with perfume, incense was offered before them, and their heads anointed with fresh oil—in the same spirit as we lay new blooms upon the graves of our dead.

Even the human forms of their gods, when relinquished by the divine element, were embalmed by their devotees. The body of Osiris, the sun god, was filled with herbs, fragrant spices, and drugs of costly ingredients. His shroud, which was of the finest linen, was steeped in rich oils and smeared with aromatic resins. His mummy was placed in a golden chest set with jewels, and this was repositied in one of the temples, where incense perpetually ascended in his honour, and flowers of delicious perfume were laid at his feet.

The Babylonians bury their dead in scented honey, and they are not alone in their strange custom. The American Indians have a peculiar mode of burial. The skin of the dead is thoroughly oiled and perfumed, and the body dressed in its richest attire. It is then encased in bark and round it is thrown a buffalo's hide, and thus it is left on a scaffold erected in the prairie. The skulls of the dead are bleached and placed in circles of a hundred or more, each resting upon a bunch of fragrant herb. The relatives know the skull of their friend, and go regularly to watch it and take food.

In the libations of the Greeks, Egyptians and others, perfume was largely used. Herodotus mentions the incident of the twelve kings of Egypt who were offering sacrifice in the Temple of

Vulcan. At the door of the temple, on the great altar, were laid bundles of sandal-wood and cinnamon. Upon these the sacrificial boar was stretched, the fire lighted, pastils of incense thrown in, and the smoke and "nidrous smells" rose high to heaven. Then into the inner courts marched the royal procession, preceded by incense burners, who bore golden salvers, and by the smaller altar the kings knelt in prayer. The priest, rising, sprinkled consecrated perfume over them, and brought forth the golden beakers for libation. But the old man, a little muddle-headed, counted eleven cups as twelve. Psammetichus, who was left without, took off his brass helmet, and in that offered the perfumed wine to Vulcan, the fire god. Previous to this the oracle had declared that he who offered a libation in a cup of brass should be sole King of Egypt. Unconsciously Psammetichus had fulfilled the condition, and he was therewith proclaimed king.

Though perfume may be the outcome of civilization, and more lavishly used by nations well to the front in manners and polish, there are instances of people of great demoralization who use it in some of their horrible customs. The Fetishmen of Ashanti supply an illustration of this, who for the benefit of young soldiers concoct a mixture of blood, of human hearts, and of fragrant herbs, and Bettany, quoting from Beecham, says, "All who have never before killed an enemy in battle eat of the preparation, it being believed that if they did not their energy would be secretly wasted by the haunting spirits of deceased foes."

Rose has a most powerful aroma—the finest extract was said in early times to be procured from Libya. It requires a hundred thousand roses to yield a hundred and eighty grains of attar. The Orientals have a partiality for this perfume. A historian tells us that "when Saladin took Jerusalem in 1188 he ordered the interior of Omar's mosque to be washed with rose water." Five hundred camels were employed to bring the attar from Damascus. As a token of welcome to strangers, the people of the East still sprinkle rose perfume upon them.

The Mohammedans, Turks, and Persians were fond of lighting aromatic herbs, and holding their beards over the salvers of smoking incense. The heads of honoured guests were anointed with perfumed oil which was procured by putting blossoms of

mogree, jasmine, and other highly-scented flowers into most delicate oils. These were preserved in small bottles, stopped with cotton and wax.

I have already referred to the bath of perfumes ; this, of course, was used only by the more voluptuous ancients, but to wash the hands in perfume at feasts was quite common. Antiphanes, in his "Corycus," disdainfully says, "they anointed their hands with perfumes, despising the crumbs of bread on which the Lacedæmonians at banquets used to wipe their hands!" And Lysias, in his speech against Alcibiades, expatiates upon that general's weaknesses, and with much scorn says, "with all his golden washhand basins and incense burners."

The use of perfume was indulged in to such an extravagant degree that some of the more ascetic men had good reason to denounce it. Solon issued an edict prohibiting its sale in Athens. Julius Cæsar and Lucinus, who were Roman consuls in 565, published a law forbidding the sale of exotics in that city. And by the laws of Lycurgus, perfumers were expelled from Sparta as being wasters of oil and encouragers of sensuousness. Clearchus wrote against the excessive use of unguents, and Socrates declaimed against them in strong terms, preferring, he said, "the smell of healthy toil and the perfume of a good and manly life." It was customary at festivals to pass round to the guests perfumes, served in alabaster boxes and vessels of gold. At one of these feasts, Cynulcus, who loved to deride the youth for the use of perfumes, was made a butt for their ridicule. Some mischievous youth anointed the cynic with much ointment, pouring it lavishly over his head and face. When he awoke he exclaimed in an angry voice, "What is this? O Hercules, will not some one come with a sponge and wipe my face, which is thus polluted with a lot of dirt?"

At the Syrian banquets it was usual for the slaves to come in with bladders full of Babylonian perfumes and bedew the garlands and walls and hangings, and fill the halls with delicious fragrance. In some of the more modern feasts statues and ornaments were provided with jets which threw out diluted essences and attars.

The Mussulmans of India, on the wedding morning, invariably present their brides with a "singardan," or toilet bag, containing, among other necessities, a box of betel leaves, an aromatic

mixture for chewing, a vial of attar of roses, and a goolabpash, with which to sprinkle rose water on the visitors.

These ladies rub pulvil or scented powder on their bodies, sprinkle perfume on their clothes, use precious unguents after washing, and paint and perfume their faces.

The peasants of Cyprus, who are greatly fond of dress and finery, tie round the head a bright silk handkerchief, plait the hair, and fasten on the side bunches of jasmine and sweet-scented geranium leaves.

The soldiers of the Crusades brought back to England the love for Eastern perfumes. They introduced the custom of dipping the fingers into water highly scented with rose, after meals.

And, later, the dandy of the sixteenth century scented his periwig with fragrant powders; his moustache with cosmetics of apple or labdanum. He sprinkled his brocaded surtout with lavender or rosemary; his linen with violets; his gloves with benzoin or musk; and his poodle with civet or ambergris. His bedroom was fumigated with favourite odours; his table decorated with "pot-pourri" and sprays yielding sweet scents; and his food flavoured with wines of delicate bouquet. It was the age of perfumes. The vanity of Queen Elizabeth seized upon this alluring luxury as eagerly as any of her subjects.

Cosmetics and fragrant oils for the hair; rouges, powders, pastes and lotions for the face; perfumed soaps for the hands; sachets for the bureau; essences for the handkerchief and ruffles; pastilles, narcissus and iris roots for the breath, were in constant request.

In the following century Samuel Pepys baptized his satin breeches and his silk stockings with bergamot, and made his ruffles odoriferous with musk or patchouli. And not long ago the fops and popinjays of Vanity Fair vied with one another in strong scents and ointments. Gay, a poet of that age of vanities, sings:

"The toilette, nursery of charms.

Completely furnished with bright beauty's arms,
The patch, the powder box, pulvil, perfumes."

Musk is a favourite aroma of the Chinese. The animal from which the perfume is procured inhabits the elevated plateaus and mountainous regions of Central Asia, also Tonquin and Thibet. The substance is found in a gland or bag, about

the size of a hen's egg, which lies near the navel of the male musk deer. When first procured it is a viscid fluid of very strong odour, which, however, dries into a powder. It comes next to the attar of roses in the estimation of the Orientals, who mix it with the mortar in the erection of some of their sacred buildings.

They also make use of it as a toilet accessory, and keep it in small alabaster sphinxes and other Egyptian figures used for smelling bottles. The Jewish women have small boxes of perfumes hanging at the end of their necklaces, and carry fragrant herbs in small bags, or sewn up in their clothes.

The Bedouins perfume their handkerchiefs with an odoriferous earth called "ares," which comes from Aden, South of Arabia, and is in much requisition by the desert Arabs. These nomad people use civet to anoint their bodies, a substance of the consistency of honey, taken from the anal glands of the civet cat, strong and offensive in itself, but agreeable when a very small proportion is mixed with other ingredients. Kitto says that "Arabs do not salute, they simply *smell* each other. It is common for a parent to say, 'Ah, child, thy smell is like the Sen-Paga-Poo,' a flower sacred to Chrisna."

However agreeable this may be to the nostrils of the Bedouin the mixture of the odours of dirty skins and the strong civet perfume is a graveolence anything but pleasant to the European nose.

Some perfumes have a stronger scent than others, some give out their fragrance at special times. Certain flowers need the warmth of the sun, some the soft rain, and others the cool night air before they venture to throw out their redolence into the atmosphere. Bartholm says, "the odour of rosemary indicates the coast of Spain more than ten leagues out to sea." And another writer declares that the "whole air of South Asia is filled with the smoke and odour of perfume."

In Capua there was one long street called "The Seplasia," which consisted entirely of perfume and unguent shops. And in Bombay, much the greater proportion of wares exhibited in the bazaars are perfumes, of endless varieties.

In hot countries, the frequent use of perfumes is a sanitary necessity, and acts as a disinfectant against the impurities of the atmosphere.

Balm was much prized by the natives of Judea and Arabia, from whence it was procured. Pliny says that Vespasian and Titus had shrubs of it growing in Rome, which were carefully tended, the branches being carried by the Romans in their triumphal processions. To gather the balsam was a slow and tedious task. Alexander the Great thought it a fair midsummer day's work to fill a "concha" with balm, that is, less than a thousandth part of a pint.

Cinnamon is an aromatic bark of odorous fragrance. It is a native of Ceylon and India. Kitto tells us that it is "precious, and appropriate to religious use. It is much valued, and was the first spice sought after, or procured in all Oriental voyages, ancient or modern." The Egyptians and Romans held it in high esteem. Herodotus assures us that a species of cinnamon was taken from the nests of birds, and also found sticking like lime to the beards of goats. This substance was gathered, compounded, and used as ointments and salves.

The South of France is the flower garden of Europe. Flower farming is extensive in the Var valley, and covers about a hundred and fifteen thousand English acres. These gardens produce over three thousand tons of flowers annually.

Lavender is our English production, and is cultivated about Hertford, Surrey and several other districts. Its name, *lavan-dula*, from *lavare*, to wash, indicates its use, which was perfuming the baths of wealthy people. Its flowers are considered excellent for disorders of the head and nerves. There are districts of lavender fields in Spain and North Africa, where it thrives mostly on high sea levels.

Sweet as are the influences of perfume as a panacea for wounds—a tonic for flagging health—a refreshment of the heat and dust—a luxury for the toilet—and a delicious, permeating gratification for the senses—we would stop short of the custom of the Carmani, who mingle their companions' blood with fragrant sherbet, and quaff it as a pledge of friendship, sealing the compact with much mutual anointing of spikenards and attars. This, to say the least, is exaggerating the province of perfumes.

The House with the Lilac Curtains.

By MARY MACLEOD.

"NONSENSE!" said I.

"That's you, Peter, all over," said my wife. "When you don't understand a thing, or haven't observed it——"

"Or it isn't there, either to understand or observe——"

"You say 'Nonsense!' and think it settles the matter. But it doesn't, by a long way."

Robin was quite ruffled. When she was in a mood like this she always reminded me of one of her own little namesakes, and aroused a wicked desire to tease and caress her at the same moment.

"Well, little Ducky-daddles, she *shall* have her own way, then!" I said soothingly. "There *shall* be a dark and dismal mystery about a very prosaic house, and a wild and thrilling romance about a very ordinary-looking young couple. In the dearth of all subjects of interest in this out-of-the-way hamlet of London, we will conjure up an exciting melodrama that shall have for its scene the awe-inspiring habitation over the way—to wit, the House with the Lilac Curtains."

"Peter, you are too ridiculous," said Robin, "and I don't care what you say. I'm quite convinced there's something queer about the people who live in No. 27. Why, they don't even keep a servant! And the other morning, when I was looking out of the window, quite early, I actually saw the wife cleaning the front doorsteps with her very own hands! What do you say to that?"

"That they do her infinite credit." For indeed the imposing flight that led up to the modest little house was of dazzling whiteness.

"Well, with all these horrid dynamiters about, perhaps the people over the way have very good reasons for not letting any one see inside their house," said Robin darkly; and tossing her head with a gesture which she flattered herself was dignified, she went off to consult with our small domestic on the important subject of dinner.

Left alone, I strolled to the window and took a survey of the house that had aroused my wife's curiosity. It stood exactly opposite our own in the row of neat little semi-detached villas that went by the name of Alexandra Grove. To my unobservant

masculine eye there seemed nothing especially remarkable about it, unless it were the fact that all the windows were closely draped with filmy muslin of a rather ugly mauve shade. Other windows in the terrace presented a variety of appearance—there were light curtains, and heavy ones; curtains looped back and curtains drawn well forward; cane blinds, wire blinds, stained glass, ground glass, reed blinds—the same house often displaying a different specimen in bed-room, drawing-room, and breakfast parlour. In no other habitation, however, was there the same uniformity that distinguished the one over the way—each window closely shrouded from ceiling to floor with soft folds of mauve-coloured muslin.

One thing at least was evident, the inmates were resolved that no prying outsider should catch a glimpse of anything that went on within.

As I stood idly gazing, the door opposite opened, and a young man came out. He was tall and gentlemanly, but very thin and ill-looking, with an indescribable air of hopeless unprosperity. He carried under his arm a well-worn leather portfolio.

The figure of a woman came with him to the door; she seemed a slight, girlish creature in a faded blue cotton gown.

"Good luck!" she cried, and waved a smiling farewell, which changed to sudden gravity as the gate clashed behind him. Then the door shut, and I remembered it was time for my own departure to my daily grind in the city.

Somehow the little picture I had seen kept recurring to my memory. The young couple reminded me in an odd way of Robin and myself.

"Just so we might have looked," I thought, "if Uncle Christopher had not given me that post on his paper."

And then a vision of Robin on her knees scrubbing our front doorsteps thrust itself with unwelcome pertinacity between my eyes and the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*.

It was very absurd to be so absorbed in the imaginary woes of quite unknown people. I could have shaken myself for such stupidity.

Uncle Christopher was the proprietor of a well-known and popular magazine. He was also by way of being editor-in-chief, but as in the case of many other similar periodicals, all the work and none of the glory fell to the share of the insignificant "Sub."

Parnassus, the magazine in question, shared Mr. Christopher Dane's affections with his yacht "Iris" and his two famous racing colts "Gilderoy" and "Glen Garry," so I need scarcely say that *Parnassus* did not receive his undivided attention. Uncle Kit, however, was erratic in his movements, very apt to turn up when least wanted, sweeping like a whirlwind through the office, overhauling everything, and upsetting in a moment the arrangements I had been laboriously making for weeks. When he was in one of these editorial moods his vigour was appalling—every manuscript had to be submitted to him; authors, artists, engravers, printers, all came in for a torrent of abuse; nothing was right, everything was going to the dogs; it was clearly to be seen how deplorably wanted was the "master's eye."

After a week or two of this unwonted exertion his interest would flag. All editorial matters would be tumbled back pell-mell on my shoulders, and having succeeded in creating a score of muddles, and trampling ruthlessly on the feelings of all our best contributors, Uncle Kit would forswear Fleet Street, and retire to the wilds of Yorkshire, or the waters of the English Channel.

At the time of which I write I had endured an unusually long spell of my chief's companionship. For fully three weeks he had come regularly to the office, and now, as he expressed it, he had "got the reins well in hand." On the day in question when I arrived I found him already installed at his desk, a pile of open letters and manuscripts in front of him, and a gloomy frown on his forehead.

"Well, you *are* early!" he remarked, with ponderous sarcasm. "You don't mean to say you have actually contrived to get here! Why, it's not half-past ten yet. I'm afraid you must have hurried over breakfast." Then, with a sudden change of tone, "Here, cart away this drivel—send 'em all back!"

He swept a heap of papers towards me as he spoke.

"I'm in a devil of a temper, and there's no denying it. Some blithering idiot of a stable-boy has let Glen Garry down. Ten to one he's broken his knees. Perkins tries to make light of the matter, but I know he's hiding something from me. I don't know why I can never get the truth from *any* one. There, take away that trash, and don't let it lumber up the office a moment longer than can be helped."

I returned to my desk, and set about my butcherly task of

"slaughtering the innocents." How many an unfortunate wretch must have loathed the sight of my handwriting!

I was about half-way through the papers when my eye was caught by a letter bearing the familiar address, Alexandra Grove, No. 27.

"By jingo! The house with the lilac curtains!" I thought.

The letter was to say that the writer would call that morning to offer some drawings which he ventured to hope would prove acceptable for the pages of *Parnassus*. It was signed "Oliver Medway."

"Poor Mr. Oliver Medway, I'm afraid you'll get but a short shrift and a quick execution!" I thought, as I glanced at my uncle's lowering brow. However, as good luck would have it, Uncle Kit had left the office before the visitor's timid rap sounded on the ground-glass panel of the door.

Mr. Medway entered with a nervous, deprecating air painfully suggestive of constant rebuffs. His large dark eyes gazed at me appealingly like those of a startled hare. His lean white fingers trembled as he untied the strings of the shabby portfolio. One by one he produced the poor little attempts which he had "ventured to hope would prove acceptable to the pages of *Parnassus*."

They were hopeless—weak of the weak, badly drawn, commonplace, utterly devoid of merit or interest. Was it not a cruel kindness even to speak words of encouragement to the producer of such wretched stuff as these?

Once again I heard the wafted words, "Good luck!" and saw the girlish figure in the faded cotton gown, and then I found my tongue faltering over the customary formula, "Very sorry, so *very* crowded—no space for months ahead," &c. I felt like a murderer plunging a knife into his victim.

Perhaps something in my manner to start with had raised false hopes in the heart of the poor young artist, but when he fully grasped the fact that I was going through the usual proceedings of "declining with thanks" a wan smile flickered over his thin face, and he hastened to hide away the poor little despised drawings with fingers that trembled even more than when he had produced them. If possible, I should say his face also went a shade whiter, but that could scarcely be.

"I quite understand," he said, with a brave attempt at cheerfulness; "you must be simply overwhelmed with contributions.

Such a splendid magazine as *Parnassus* is, too! Of course you have all the best artists of the day." He paused, then went on with a slight effort, "May I ask if you could recommend to me any other magazine that you think these drawings might suit?"

I felt like a traitor—surely it was only prolonging his torture?—but I mentioned the names of some pictorial publications which might *possibly* have an opening. He thanked me in a voice that was resolutely steady, but all the courage in the world could not take away that drawn look round the lips, nor the unconscious expression of pathos in the wistful eyes.

He bade me good day, and left the room. What sudden impulse made me open the door and call him back? It was pure idiocy on my part. What good in the long run would it do the poor wretch to have one or two drawings taken when all others were inevitably doomed to rejection? How would the artistic reputation of *Parnassus* suffer, too, if it became known that this class of work ran any chance of acceptance! All the same——

"Oh, Mr. Medway, it has just struck me, may I have another look at your portfolio?"

It was distinctly embarrassing—my late visitor had quietly subsided on to the stone steps that led to other offices on the floor above; and there was a suspicious moistness about his eyes.

He rose hastily, a wave of colour rushing over his pale face.

"I beg your pardon," he said, somewhat unsteadily, "I must apologize for sitting on your steps. I'm a little tired. I have been walking about for some hours, and it's very foolish of me, but somehow I felt a little faint. I thought the feeling would go off if I rested for a few minutes."

Tired? No wonder; one unbroken series of rebuffs would wear out the stoutest heart, especially in a half-starved body.

Once again I went through the collection of dreadful little drawings, with cold-blooded desperation picked out three at random, and hid the others away in their receptacle. What a change came over my visitor! His face glowed with delight, his figure seemed to expand and lose its expression of nervous timidity. One question hovered on his lips, but he lacked assurance to speak it.

"With regard to terms," I said, in my most official manner, "we generally pay on publication" (I felt rather than saw the breathless suspense that hung on my words); "but in the case

of small things like these it will save trouble if I give you a cheque at once."

"Thank you, just as you please, whatever is usual," murmured the young man.

"Hang it all, there goes Robin's and my trip to Burnham Beeches!" I thought with much disgust, as a mauve-coloured slip of paper passed from my hand to the pocket of my unwelcome visitor. It is scarcely necessary to remark that the signature at the foot was connected with my own private banking account, for it was hardly to be expected that *Parnassus* should support my editorial aberrations to the extent of purchasing the work of Mr. Oliver Medway.

The young man went away radiant. As for me, it may as well be frankly confessed that I spent the rest of the day in a state of bounding ill-temper. It is peculiarly irritating to see utter incompetence combined with urgent want.

My ill-humour was not improved later on by the return of Uncle Christopher to the office, and the subsequent discovery by him of the wretched works of art. I had thrust them, as I fondly hoped, out of sight into a dusty pigeon-hole, but Uncle Kit was in one of his prowling moods, and he ferreted them out with the swiftness of a pursuing Nemesis. We had a brisk passage-at-arms, in which I made no explanation except that they were "private property," and in which Uncle Kit as much as told me he didn't believe me, accused me of squandering the editorial funds, and remarked that I was totally unfitted for the post of responsibility which he had been fool enough to give me. Of course there was only one reply to be made to this. I made it with all the dignity that was suitable to the occasion, and left the office with the cheerful reflection that my post as assistant editor of *Parnassus* would probably soon be a thing of the past.

I reached home at six o'clock, let myself in with my latchkey, and went into the drawing-room. No Robin, no fire, only a handful of ashes in the untidy grate. How empty and uncomfortable the house seemed. More food for ill-temper here.

But before I could summon Matilda, our small domestic, to inquire for her mistress, the culprit herself appeared.

"Peter, you'll never, *never* guess where I've just come from," she cried, her eyes shining with excitement.

"From walking to and fro——"

"Bad boy, hush——"

"In the High street," I concluded, "staring into all the shop windows, and calculating how many new frocks you 'simply *must* have, to be decent.'"

"Why, you know you said yourself, Peter, that my grey cloth was settling down to a sober old age—or something else equally rude," said Robin indignantly. "But never mind, I've something far more important to tell you. I've actually been inside *the house with the lilac curtains*!"

She paused to enjoy my surprise.

"This was how it was. Mr. Medway—that's their name—had been out, and directly he got home this afternoon he just fainted dead away. The poor little wife was so frightened she ran across the road to ask if Matilda could go for a doctor. So I went over to see if there were anything I could do to help. Peter, do you know, I think they must be just *dreadfully* poor!"

Her voice sank to an awe-struck whisper.

"There was scarcely a thing in the house, and Mrs. Medway had no money—not a farthing. When her husband got better the first words he said were, 'I've sold three drawings—three guineas—look in my pocket,' and the wife gave such a scream of joy—and she clasped her hands—and then I thought I had better leave them. So I went downstairs to make some tea, and there was scarcely any food in the larder, and only a handful of coals in the cellar. And there's very little furniture in any of the rooms."

"Well, why do they deck up their house in that ridiculous fashion, with all that lilac muslin?" I asked grumpily.

"Mrs. Medway told me about that, too. When they married, some rich, eccentric aunt gave them all that muslin as a wedding present, yards and yards and *yards* of it. Wasn't it silly? She had had it by her for years, and didn't know what to do with it. Mrs. Medway thought she might as well use it to cover the windows, so that the neighbours shouldn't spy out the emptiness of the rooms."

"So that explains the grand mystery of the shrouded house?"

"Yes, really the way people talk is too ridiculous! To hear some of the remarks they made about No. 27, one might have thought there was something awful going on there."

"How very foolish of them! But, Robin, if this aunt of theirs is so rich, why doesn't she do something for the young couple?"

"Because she is very angry with them. She hated the idea of Claudia marrying a poor man, and besides, she said, Mr. Medway would never get one of his pictures sold. He had a small income when Claudia married him, but since then he has lost every penny. They have really been in dreadful need, but were too proud to apply to her for help."

"Well, they'd better put their pride in their pocket; they don't seem to have much else there," I remarked unkindly.

"Claudia—she said I was to call her that—is so delighted about Mr. Medway's selling his drawings. She says it will encourage him so to go on with his work."

"Yes, that's the worst of it."

"Why, Peter, how oddly you speak. One would think you were *sorry* for the poor young fellow's success," said Robin, surveying me severely.

"My love, what a preposterous idea!" I ejaculated feebly.

"Anyhow, Claudia is going to write about it to her aunt, and tell her how ill Mr. Medway is. She thinks when she finds out that he is really so clever and gets his work taken by the best magazines, she will make it all up and be friends again."

"Let us devoutly hope so," I murmured.

And ridiculously sanguine as this seemed, it was what actually did happen.

Coming home one afternoon I saw an unwonted flutter of excitement in the respectable, if somewhat drowsy, precincts of Alexandra Grove. All the Bates children stood in a bevy at the gate of No. 23; a white-capped head was thrust from the top front window opposite; the agitated figure of little Miss Timmins was clearly apparent through the wire gauze blind of No. 29. The object of all this interest and curiosity was a large handsome carriage with two large handsome horses, and a large—no, *not* handsome—coachman, which stood in front of No. 27. Presently the door opened, and a wizened little elderly lady appeared, followed by a tall, gaunt young man. After them, no longer in her faded cotton gown, but in a natty costume of fawn and brown, trimmed with soft fur, came Mrs. Medway.

She looked across at Robin, and smiled and nodded; and then the large fat horses moved off at a solemn amble of three miles

an hour, carrying to their new habitation the inmates of the house with the lilac curtains.

"It's all right," Robin explained to me gaily. "The old aunt is going to have them live with her. She has a great big lonely house up Highgate way. Mr. Medway is going to have a beautiful studio all to himself. Now that he has made such a splendid start, she thinks it would be a thousand pities not to keep on with his art. And Claudia and I think so, too. Don't you?"

"Certainly—of course—a thousand pities," I agreed fervently.

The next morning there was a solemn bonfire in the editorial grate.

The Haunted Monastery.

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IN the year 1875 I was the English partner in the firm of Innocenti and Co., Via Condotti, Rome, *bric-à-brac* dealers, money lenders, &c. The civil war which had thrust out the foreign mercenary was at an end, and a King had been placed at the Quirinal as the guardian of Italian liberty; under these circumstances it was a matter of course that a rush of tourists of all nationalities should invade the Imperial city, and in consequence our house was overwhelmed with orders for curios and antiquities of every description; the profits were enormous, as we bought and sold to equal advantage. The head partner was Signor Josef Innocenti, a stout, handsome man of fifty years, with his short-cut hair showing a tinge of grey at the temples.

Bruno, his only son, was a junior partner, but I had been one for seven years by the special favour of our head, who insisted on informing every one how I had saved his life and property, both of which were threatened, during the civil war, at Naples in 1859, and into which I had plunged as one of Garibaldi's orderly officers. But those days were long past, and seldom thought of.

Innocenti and Co. had left Naples and opened a business in Rome when Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed King of united Italy, and I was offered a share in it, which I accepted with gratitude.

One afternoon, late in May of this year, a Franciscan monk walked into our shop and presented a letter for the *padrone*, with the intimation that he was to wait for a reply.

Bruno, who always transacted business with our Italian customers, carried the missive to his father, and in a few minutes I was called into the office, when Signor Innocenti informed me that the letter was from the superior of Tertti Monastery, and contained the request that he would at once either come or send a trusted agent to him, adding in a postscript that Cardinal Antonelli had advised him to consult the firm on any subject connected with the sale or valuation of works of art.

"I must beg you to go," he said, holding out the note for me to read. "My sprained foot ties me to the office; and Bruno," he continued, smiling on his son, "knows he is too feather-headed and young to inspire confidence in a father superior. You, Marco, look much older than your age, and speak Italian like a Roman. Any valuation of paintings, coins, jewels and works of art you can make as well, or better, than any one in Italy. I shall write the superior that one of the firm will visit him to-morrow, and you will answer to the name of Innocenti; Bruno can take your duties, which will not be heavy, as the season is over."

When his father ceased speaking Bruno exclaimed:

"Tertti! that is the haunted monastery where the footsteps of the dead monks are heard and their figures seen wandering through the corridors if they die with a secret or with their sins unconfessed."

"Nonsense, Bruno," interrupted Signor Innocenti. "You are thinking of Orvieto and the tale of the mad monk who used to escape from the infirmary and scare the community occasionally."

Bruno shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"Well, in any case, Marco is not afraid of ghosts, and can tell us if I am wrong when he comes back."

A letter was then written, appointing the next day for my visit to Tertti, and delivered to the messenger, who during the time he was waiting had studied his prayer-book or fingered the rosary that hung at his side. Immediately after his departure we discussed various matters of business and the details of my journey. It was certainly annoying to me that I should have to leave Rome at this period, as Leonora, the only daughter of Signor Innocenti, was daily expected with Carmina Nulla, her friend, from her convent school at Bologna. Though not a

beauty I thought her the most charming girl in the world, and as her visits were never prolonged beyond a week, it was provoking that duty obliged me to leave before her arrival, but I determined to hurry over my business and return quickly.

* * * *

It was early in the afternoon when I reached the railway station, which was three miles from the monastery. Here I found the monk whose acquaintance I had made yesterday; the superior had sent him to meet me, and he held a mule by the bridle, which he cautioned me was very fresh to-day and full of tricks.

I thanked him for the warning and then inquired my road to Tertti.

"Straight on," he replied; after leaving the station-cutting it would lie before me in the distance; I could not miss it."

I mounted and trotted briskly along; at the top of the hill I saw the monastery before me on a spur of the mountain, which stretched above the plain. It resembled a mediæval fortress, with its high grey stone walls; and the numerous towers, which ostentatiously bristled up in every quadrangle, must have been built for defence in the middle ages.

I galloped up the avenue at the suggestion of my mule, who had mended his pace the last mile (but I cannot believe that he was ever either lively or tricky), and reached the noble archway with its tower over the gates.

The porter had evidently been watching my progress, for he came out of a side wicket before I could spring from my saddle and ring the bell. He relieved me of the beast, and directed me to enter and cross the outer quadrangle, against the walls of which were built spacious outbuildings, stables and sheds for cattle, now, alas! in a state of ruin and decay. In the mediæval days these had been occupied by the horses and beasts of burden belonging to the guests who passed to and fro from Rome; for the monasteries in all countries were then the only hostels for the traveller.

I walked round the large crucifix in the centre, and was met by two monks at the door of the inner quadrangle: they led me to the strangers' parlour, where I remained for perhaps twenty minutes; then an older brother came and said the reverend father would receive me in his private apartments. I followed

him till we reached a large ante-chamber ; my guide opened one of the two doors in it and bade me enter.

The room was empty, and after glancing round I advanced to the narrow window cut in the thick outer wall, and gazed over the plain before me.

A slight rustle caused me the next moment to look round, and standing in the doorway I saw a man of most imposing height and appearance ; he was, however, painfully thin, careworn and sad-looking ; his close-cut hair was scanty and grey ; he wore the usual brown habit of the order, but wore it with a difference. I was about to bend and attempt to kiss his hand when he stopped me, saying :

" Signor Marco, I think we have met before, when your name was not Innocenti."

I stood quite bewildered by this address, and gazed at the speaker, puzzled to find some one knew me whom I did not recollect, though the voice seemed somewhat familiar. I shook my head doubtfully, and then with a smile and in a few words he brought to my memory the almost forgotten past, and told me we had been comrades—almost friends—during the wars which brought all classes and peoples to aid the struggle for liberty and unification in Italy.

" How did you recognize me ?" I inquired. " I cannot trace in you the least resemblance to one of my old companions in 1859-60."

" Have you forgotten Léon Kohary, and our fencing matches at Naples ?" was the reply, and slowly I began to realize that a page of the past I thought destroyed and forgotten was placed before me to refresh my memory.

" Tell me how you discovered me, Kohary. I am no longer the active young man of twenty-five, and it is fifteen years since we met."

" I have known for some months that you were living in Rome, and a partner in the important house of Innocenti and Co., and I trusted *you* would be sent to me in answer to my request, but I could not be certain till I saw you from the gate towers riding up the avenue ; then I remembered your mad race into Palermo on the bishop's mule we borrowed to carry dispatches to our general, and was relieved to recognize in the rider ' Marco, the Inglese,' as we called you. But we cannot exchange

experiences till our supper is over, and I am free for to-night to devote myself to you ; it will not appear strange to the brothers for my guest to come and spend the evening here, and we shall not be disturbed."

As he spoke the superior struck a bell, and in a few moments the venerable old monk, Brother Anthony, appeared. I was given into his charge, with instructions to place me in the rooms called St. Jerome's, and attend to my requirements ; then with a gesture of the hand I was dismissed.

Brother Anthony preceded me along the narrow stone corridor and down countless steps till we reached the chapel cloisters, with the mixture of flower garden and burial ground in the centre. After passing through this we turned into a passage, at the end of which my guide unlocked a door, and said, "Ecco, signor ;" he pointed to my travelling bag on the table and asked what I required, and when I said, "Only a jug of water," he smiled, and said no doubt I was Inglese—and with the promise to return presently he closed the door.

I listened to his footsteps till they ceased, and then made a hasty inspection of my quarters, which consisted of two rooms and a loggia wide enough for exercise in wet weather. A square opening in the outside wall of the monastery lighted this, and was two hundred feet above the rocky ravine below ; a stone bench was placed conveniently near it, and I sat down to think.

My eyes wandered aimlessly over the extended view before me, caused by a gap in the range of mountains, while my thoughts were employed with the history of my old companion, the superior, and with wondering how he could have obtained his present position. I had known him formerly as the most independent freethinker and irreverent jester in the battalion, a very courageous soldier and accomplished swordsman, the pride of his regiment, because he was the tallest and the handsomest of all Garibaldi's volunteers. What convulsion, political or religious, could have thrown him into the arms of the Church, or have induced him to take the vows of a Franciscan monk ? It was useless to conjecture : I must wait for his explanation, so I rose from my seat and began to study my surroundings.

The walls and ceilings of the two rooms were covered with frescoes of scenes from the life of St. Jerome, and I felt certain they were the work of Perugino or of his pupils ; the colouring

was as vivid as when they were painted. At the end of the inner chamber was a large oil painting of the Assumption of the Virgin, which could only have been painted by the hand of the Umbrian master himself; this I assumed to be the treasure which I was sent for to value, and I placed myself before it to examine its beauties carefully.

A low wooden bedstead with a mattress and blankets, a chair and a praying bench, were the only contents of this room; a stone receptacle for holy water was placed near the archway at the entrance. There was no door except the outer one; in this was cut the sliding panel, which was opened from the passage, so that the head of the monastery could at any moment of the day or night inspect the cell.

After I had unpacked my travelling bag, which lay on the table in the entrance room, I returned to the painting, and was startled in a few moments by a voice at my elbow announcing that Brother Anthony had sent him to guide me to the refectory.

I turned and found my companion was a young monk, who stood with eyes cast down and his hands folded in the sleeves of his habit.

I accompanied him, and found my seat was to be at the end of the superior's table, and our supper, though not luxurious, was sufficiently good and plentiful.

One of the brothers read from the stone pulpit in the centre the portions for the evening exercise, and after our meal was ended all passed before the superior and made a low reverence, which he answered by raising his hand and blessing them.

When all had left he turned to me and invited me to come to his rooms for a cup of coffee, which he said his doctor had insisted on his taking every evening since his long illness a few years back.

When we reached the outer hall he carefully bolted the door, and we entered his room, when he lighted his oil stove and prepared the coffee.

"I shall have two hours now free," said my companion, after a few moments, "as my chaplain will conduct the service in the chapel to-night, and your coffee is ready: sit down in the old leather chair and I will begin my story. I know you find it difficult to believe that any circumstances could have been weighty enough to induce me to exchange the red shirt for the

brown habit of the monk, but as I seek your aid I must explain to you how the events of the last fifteen years have combined to place me in authority here.

"We parted in 1861, as you no doubt remember, when our brave chief returned to Caprera. My destination was Munich, where my father was established as *maitre d'armes* to the Royal family and court. We are members of the younger branch of the Hungarian Counts of Kohary, and this doubtless was one of the reasons that the fencing school was sought by the Bavarian nobles. After a short rest I found amusement in practising with the more advanced pupils and in giving lessons to the younger men.

"In the first class were the two Barons Swatzhof, Otto and Carl; the eldest was only twenty-two years of age, and both were distinguished by their skill in all manly exercises. We very soon became intimate acquaintances. I was constantly invited to the Swatzhof palace, where I met my fate and fell deeply in love with the young sister of my friends; but I received a cruel wound when, on proposing for her hand after I had ascertained that my love was returned, I was coldly informed that even if the Countess Hilda wished to form a *mésalliance* with the son of a *maitre d'armes* her family would prefer to bury her in a convent; and Otto warned me in the most insulting terms that if I ventured to speak or write to his sister, either he or Carl would shoot me without warning.

"Hilda was then carried off to Paris, but contrived to send me a few lines by her maid, entreating me to rescue her from the harsh treatment she was receiving.

"I followed the family immediately, and with the connivance of Lisa very soon met my love frequently; and when we heard that it was the brothers' intention to leave their sister in the charge of an aunt who was the head of the convent at St. Denis, we arranged to fly to England. In London, with the help of my German friends and by many misrepresentations of facts, we were married. When Hilda's elopement was discovered, her brothers wasted much time in following a false clue, which I had prepared with her maid's assistance and that of her sister, who was living in Munich. The brothers after some delay became aware of this, but notwithstanding their utmost efforts they only reached London a week after we had changed our name to Smith

and started for Sicily. We settled at Girgenti, and I occupied myself in sketching and painting the ruins of the Greek temples, which pictures I sold readily at high prices to the American and other tourists. If perfect bliss is ever realized on earth we enjoyed it for five years. The one faint foreboding which sometimes crossed my thoughts was caused by the remembrance of Otto Swatzhof's threats to kill me.

"The only articles of value which we possessed were some jewels which my wife had inherited from her mother, and these had been given to her by her brothers when she attained her eighteenth year (for both parents died before she was ten years old), and as her maid Lisa had charge of them there was no difficulty in carrying them with her when we left Paris. For the simple life we led at Girgenti we had ample means from the sale of my paintings and the money my father gave me before I left Munich; but when our daughter was born, we began to save, and we determined to sell the costly jewels some day to increase her dowry.

"The blow I sometimes feared fell when we had lived five years in Sicily. A shadow on my painting and a slight sound behind me caused me to look round—to meet Otto Swatzhof with a revolver pointed at my head.

"'At last!' he shouted.

"Before he ceased speaking I rushed towards him to knock the weapon from his hand; but a figure sprang between us, and then I heard Hilda's cry as she fell, shot to the ground. The voice of her brother had brought her to die for me. A second shot laid me senseless, and I remember nothing more. All that followed has been told me at different times by various persons, when I recovered the memory of a former life.

"We were found on the evening of the same day on which Otto committed his murder. Hilda had been dead for hours, but I still breathed, though unconscious. Brigands were supposed to be the authors of the outrage. The Franciscan monastery being the nearest habitation, we were carried to one of the outbuildings.

"In the course of a year I recovered sufficiently from the wound in my head to become a lay brother; then after a probation of six months I accepted the monk's habit and vows, and rose gradually in a year or two to the next in rank to the prior, a fever having killed ten of our number.

"You will hardly believe me, Marco, when I assure you that my memory of this part of my life is blank. I cannot recall a single incident, but I have been told that no brother was more loved and respected than I was, or more self-sacrificing for the good of the community. My repute grew as years passed ; then I was transferred to Tertti, and when the superior died I was elected to be the head, and the holy father congratulated the brotherhood on having a man to govern them who was so 'spiritually minded' and of more than average ability.

"Three years ago I was attacked by malarial fever, and when I regained consciousness after the delirium left me, I was utterly at a loss to understand where and what I was ; for weeks I lay silent on my mattress, carefully tended by the brothers, and trying to understand what had happened to me. My nurses thought weakness caused my comatose state. Brother Anthony was especially ordered to wait on me, and from him by degrees I learnt my own history, when I became able to collect my thoughts and ask questions. No doubt I was considered still delirious, and to pacify me all my inquiries were answered. Then my mental agony became almost unbearable, but having lost my dearest treasure, I determined to accept my position and work out Hilda's and my own redemption.

"When able to travel I started for Rome, to place myself in the hands of the head of our Church. I told him all the events of my past life, and he said that it was 'the will of the Almighty to make a sinner into a saint, and he would not hinder by a word the work begun ;' then he blessed me, and I obtained permission to visit Girgenti. It was not till I wandered among the ruins that my memory fully returned, and I remembered my little daughter.

"Where was she ? What had become of her ? Had Otto carried her away ? Had she died among the ruins ?

"No inquiries threw light on the subject—not a soul in the town could even recollect the child, and I was forbidden to betray my identity.

"I ascertained from the imperfectly kept burial documents of Girgenti that my Hilda had been buried as an unknown stranger in a common grave with others.

"I returned here a broken-down wreck of a man, but accepted my punishment, and for the last year have felt more resigned ; but a strange incident which occurred last month has renewed

my grief, and I beseech you, Marco, to help me. I had heard you were one of the well-known firm of Innocenti, and that the valuation of works of art was usually left to you ; therefore, with an introduction from Cardinal Antonelli, I wrote to your head partner hoping you would be sent to Terti, but it was not to value our paintings that I wanted you, it was to help me find my little girl. A clue relating to her fell into my hands thus.

"Last November I received a letter from the prior of a monastery in Bavaria, asking me if I could take in for a time an invalid brother of our order : he was the head of a noble Bavarian family, who was in a very bad state of health, and the climate of Italy was considered necessary for his recovery. I consented to accept him for the winter season, and late in the month of November he arrived.

"I saw very little of Brother Damien except at meals, in the refectory, or in chapel three times daily, and should hardly have recognized him outside the walls. One evening, nearly three months after he joined us, I missed some one from the opposite table and inquired which of the monks was ill. My chaplain then informed me he feared the new German brother was very unwell. Would I come and see him and give instructions for his treatment medically ?

"I paid a visit to his cell immediately after supper, and found the poor man in a high fever and coughing every moment ; he was occasionally delirious and then became conscious for a few moments.

"I stood gazing at him as he lay on his pallet bed, when some muttered words in German caught my ear and I bent over him to listen.

"My movement roused him ; he looked up at me with horror in his eyes and exclaimed, as he started up from his bed :

"'Am I never to be forgiven ? Are the dead always to reproach me ? Hilda is constantly near me and now Kohary joins her ! It is the devil who sends them ! Holy mother, save me !'

"After shouting these words he became so convulsed that we were obliged to hold him down by force—and I recognized in Brother Damien Otto Swatzhof ! Though no one in the monastery understood one word of German, I determined to nurse and watch the invalid as much as my numberless duties would allow me, particularly at night.

"The doctor in the village agreed with our brother, the chaplain, who had once been a distinguished surgeon, that the case was hopeless and a month or two would end his life.

"In a few days I won the confidence of my patient, and he related to me during his lucid intervals all the events of his life. He appeared to derive relief from his mental distress in acquainting me with the circumstances which led to the murder of his sister and of her husband (my fear of the consequences prevented me from informing him that he had only killed Hilda). I listened breathlessly when he gave the account of how he seized the child as she was running towards the bodies of her parents, and wrapped her in his cloak, telling Carl to take her in the carriage and wait for him at the small seaport the other side of Girgenti, whilst he visited the apartment of his victims and destroyed all papers which might lead to their identification—he found of course the box of jewels and carried it away with him. After a few weeks a horror of remorse possessed him, and he plunged into every kind of dissipation, till his health became so shattered that his life was a burden to him; then he sought peace in the cloister and after a time was sent to die at Terri.

"The child he had placed in a convent, but he had retained the jewels in his possession safely packed in a leather roll which he had brought with him, intending to place it in the superior's charge as a trust to be used for the benefit of his niece whenever his death should take place. I inquired where he had deposited the jewels. He seemed to wander a little, then answered:

"'The superior has them. They are safe.'

"'Where did you place the child?' was my next question.

"'When I die the address of the convent will be found in my legacy to the superior,' he answered faintly as he closed his eyes, and presently sank into a disturbed sleep, then I returned to my apartments, leaving the charge of the patient to Brother Anthony.

"I threw myself on my bed, intending to rest for an hour or so but I slept nearly the whole day and no one would disturb me; when at last I awoke and found our chaplain watching me, I knew that Otto's spirit had departed. He died very peacefully, I was told, from exhaustion. I ordered the body to be placed in a coffin and taken to the chapel. Otto was the last of the elder branch, and the title and estates have gone to the next of kin, a distant cousin. I saw him when he came here to take Otto's remains

to Munich for burial in the monastery chapel cloister. Now, Marco, I have told you all. I have not yet discovered the packet of jewels or the address of the convent where the child is living, but I cannot imagine, I dare not think, that there is no packet—that the tale I listened to is untrue, or the wandering delirious imaginations of a sick man.”

It was painful to watch the superior's growing excitement as he related the events of his life, and as he paced up and down or halted before me, his eyes gleaming wildly, I could not prevent the thought crossing my mind that the story was partly imaginary, and that he had never recovered the full possession of his reason since his last attack of fever. I soothed him with promises to aid him, and when he quietly returned to his seat I began to question him on the subject of the Baron Otto's life in the monastery, and the possibility of his being able to hide the jewels ; and inquired what search he had made to find them : then I ascertained that all the unused cells were locked and the keys in the superior's charge, but with the exception of these it was possible for an inmate of the monastery to visit every chamber or building in it, if he carefully watched his opportunity.

“ Could he enter this room ? ” I inquired.

“ I think that would be impossible,” said the superior, “ as when I am away either my chaplain or Brother Anthony would take charge of it. All the papers and deeds connected with the monastery are kept in the suite of rooms next this, to which there is access through my little oratory, the other entrance in the ante-chamber being always locked ; they are set apart for the summer retreat of the cardinals, or for any ecclesiastic who brings a letter of introduction from one of them. In the earlier days of this century the sovereign pontiffs came on a visit of a few days, but no one has inhabited them since last autumn, when Cardinal Antonelli was here. I will show you over them to-morrow when we make the tour of the buildings, which I hope you will do, with the view to discover the hidden trust. It is almost midnight, and you are doubtless ready to go to bed.”

With these words the superior lighted the little oil lamp of earthenware placed on the table, and accompanied me to my rooms, in which was burning a light hanging from the centre of the ceiling by long chains. We bade each other good-night, and I watched the tall figure cross the cloisters and enter the chapel ;

then I shut my door, found my writing case, and began a letter to my partners informing them of my safe arrival at Tertti, and promising full particulars in a day or two ; but before I could end it sleep overcame me, and after a vain effort to rouse myself I gave in, threw myself half-dressed on my bed, where I soon fell into a deep slumber.

A cold wind on my face woke me in the morning, a gleam of sunshine fell across the floor from the loggia, and I saw it must be nearly five o'clock. Rising to look at my watch I became aware that the outer door was wide open, which had certainly been shut the previous night. As I crossed over to close it I heard the sound of uncertain footsteps slowly pacing along, but on looking out into the passage no one could be seen. I advanced a pace or two in the direction of the chapel, but the steps ceased at once, to be again perceptible as I turned back. Puzzled, I followed the sounds past my rooms to the end of the passage wall, and saw a very narrow, steep stone staircase, up which, it appeared to me, the footsteps were ascending with difficulty. Climbing to the top, I entered a narrow, low, vaulted corridor with doors on one side, all closed except the last, which was wide open. Looking in I saw a small whitewashed cell with a wooden bedstead ; on the end of this had been thrown the brown habit of a Franciscan monk, but it had fallen on the floor. Some impulse I cannot even now understand, induced me to lift and replace it, but the weight of the garment was unusual, and I began to examine it to ascertain the cause, and found a hard substance sewn into the seam where the hood joined the collar. I opened my knife and cut the stitches, and then a key fell into my hand ; it was very antique, and the handle richly worked and gilt. At that moment the chapel bell commenced to ring for prayers, and I placed it in my vest pocket, and determined to go back the way I had come ; but as I passed through the narrow door the footsteps fell distinctly on my ear, and I seemed impelled to follow them through countless small chambers ; probably they had formerly served for the servants of the guests ; now they seemed to be used as a passage from one part of the monastery to the other. I came out at last on the landing of a broad oak staircase ; down this I ran and met the superior just coming out of his ante-room.

"Why, you are early, Marco," he said, "and not quite dressed

either. How did you reach this part of the building? Are you coming to chapel? No. Well, will you wait in my rooms? I shall not be long."

I shook my head, and told him I could not at present explain my appearance, but after prayers would do so. He went on quickly, and I retraced my steps; the door of the cell into which I had intruded was shut and locked! In a few moments my toilet engaged my whole attention, and as no footsteps had been heard since my meeting with the superior, I began to persuade myself the echoes of my own steps in the vaulted narrow corridors had caused the sound. In about half-an-hour Brother Anthony came to call me for the first meal of the day, and as we walked together I inquired if he thought the reverend father was quite as strong and well as before his illness.

"Alas, no!" he said. "The father never spares himself or rests; he is the servant of the whole country round, who love and reverence him as a saint, and trouble him too often about their temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Will the signor persuade him to take a little more rest?"

By this time we had reached the ante-room, and hearing our voices the superior came to the door, and told me coffee was ready if I preferred that to the wine of the country. As both were brought for me, and a roll of rye bread to eat with either, I accepted the coffee; then sat down in the old leather chair and related my experience of the morning. The superior listened attentively, then said:

"You only relate the same story I have heard many times lately from my chaplain, Father Antoine, and from the brothers who have their dormitories in the same part of the monastery buildings in which Otto Swatzhof died. They have seen a figure walk in the upper corridor and enter his cell; but on approaching it the door has always been found locked. You have no doubt heard the belief so widely spread, that if a monk dies at Tertti burdened by an unrevealed secret, his spirit haunts the place, and endeavours to give a clue that will lead to its discovery. I thought at first, when the accounts of these sounds and appearances were given to me, that the brothers, being aware that brother Damien died without absolution, imagined a spirit in every flickering shadow caused by their lamps, or by the sunbeams penetrating into the long stone passages; but you knew

nothing of these details, and yet the footsteps drew you into the cell once inhabited by the deceased monk. I locked the door myself, and no habit was left there ; nothing except the wooden bedstead. It appears to me that you are the instrument chosen to show us where the jewels have been placed. Let me see the key you cut from the collar of the monk's habit."

I handed over the key, which he examined, saying :

"I know it well ; it opens the cabinet in the cardinal's rooms, which I can enter through my oratory as well as from the ante-room ; but I have never missed the key, though I am frequently in those apartments. Come with me there at once."

We rose and passed into the suite of rooms through the little oratory. The first we entered had a large carved bedstead in the centre, the faded hangings of which were of red and yellow silk, embroidered with the papal tiara, keys, and other emblems. At the side of the bed stood an ebony cabinet inlaid with ivory.

"We keep nothing in this but relics of our visitors ; a night sock of Pio Nono is our most valuable treasure. Every article left behind by a guest is placed in the cabinet till it is inquired for. But the key is still in the lock, as it always has been!"

Advancing while speaking, the superior tried to unlock the door, but the key came out in his hand ; it was too small, and had been wedged in with paper. It was something like the one I held, but the handle was painted yellow, not gilt. When I tried mine in the lock it fitted exactly and opened the door directly. We both felt anxious and excited ; but nothing could be seen in this division of the cabinet but a mass of trifles, consisting of letters, bills, papers, old missals and devotional books of all sizes and shapes, torn lace chalice veils and embroidered maniples. We pulled out all these things and threw them on the bed ; there was not a trace of the jewels or parcel of any kind. Then my experience as a *bric-à-brac* dealer suggested a search for a secret well or panel. Doubtless, in the Swatzhof palace in Munich many antique cabinets were preserved, and Otto was well acquainted with these hiding-places of a former age, which were all constructed in much the same manner. Feeling carefully round the inside, I touched a knob at the side and pressing it, part of a panel fell forward, disclosing on the shelf a thick leather roll. Seizing it, I handed it to the superior, exclaiming :

"Be happy, Kohary! In this is the clue which will lead you to your daughter. I know her dowry is not your first thought."

"Thank God!" he replied; "I can at last hope that my crimes of the past are forgiven by Him, and that those I have injured, though no longer on earth, have accepted my entreaties for pardon. Otto was ignorant that I still lived, but an Almighty power brought him here to die in my charge, and induced him to entrust to me the care and fortunes of the child he stole. You, too, Marco, are the instrument used to place in my hands the information I despaired of ever finding. Come with me to my room. We will examine the trust together."

The thick leather packet was addressed to Father Clement, the superior of the Terzi Monastery. On opening the first fold of the roll, we came to a letter written by Otto Swatzhof, which briefly entreated the superior to accept the guardianship of an unfortunate child whose parents were dead, and who had no relations, and only one friend—himself. The jewels and clothes were his property, and formed the only provision he could make for her future; and, as he felt his life could not last much longer, he gave them absolutely to the reverend father as a secret trust to be used for the benefit of the girl Carmina Nulla, who had been living for the last ten years in the Convent of the Visitation at Bologna. If it was ascertained within a year or two that she had no vocation for the life of a recluse, the prioress would allow her to leave at the request of the bearer of the inclosed order, as had been agreed when she entered, provided all expenses incurred on her account were defrayed.

When the name Carmina Nulla was read, I uttered an exclamation of surprise, and told the superior she was a youthful acquaintance of mine, and the little friend of Signorina Innocenti, who was a boarder also at the same establishment. We sat silent for some moments, thinking over the strange circumstances disclosed to us; then turned to examine the jewels with the inventory. The most valuable article mentioned was a diamond necklace of single stones; it was impossible to fix any price for it. There were also rings and bracelets, and all the jewellery necessary for a lady belonging to the court circle of Bavaria. Presently, with a deep sigh, the superior swept all the articles scattered over the table into a heap, and began to ask me countless questions about his daughter. What colour were her

eyes? Her hair? How tall was she? He was anxious to hear every minute particular that I could remember. We were at that moment disturbed by a messenger from Rome, who came to tell me Signor Innocenti had been taken suddenly ill; would I return directly?

All was hurry and excitement after I received this summons. Packing up my bag, I sent it on by the servant, and then went to the superior to say farewell. He looked pale and wan, but spoke cheerfully of the future, and of some day meeting Carmina, though he knew the relationship between them could never be acknowledged. He gave over to me the jewels and letter to the head of the convent at Bologna, but burnt all the papers, including Otto's will, and placed everything without reserve in my hands. I was to adopt Carmina, and keep the secret of the trust, acting as I thought best in regard to the sale of the jewels and investments of the proceeds for her benefit. With tears in our eyes we embraced and parted.

On reaching Rome I heard our chief was seriously ill with an attack of cholera. The visit of his daughter and her little friend had been postponed. For the next week I was so occupied with my double duties at the office that I hardly thought of Terti, and was overwhelmed with grief when, six days after, Brother Anthony came to acquaint me with the death of his beloved superior. He had fainted one morning at prayers, and died in the evening. He had charged the faithful old monk to bring me his crucifix as a remembrance.

With the passing away of my old comrade my story ends, but some reader may wish to know how I fulfilled the trust I accepted fifteen years ago. Look with me, all who care to see, into the garden of a Swiss *châlet*, where we always spend our autumn together. Carmina is running races with her two eldest boys, while her husband, Bruno Innocenti, tosses his youngest in a swing. On the marriage of my adopted daughter with our junior partner, I settled on her a large dowry and the Swiss *châlet*.

The secret of the trust has never been suspected; but some of our Roman friends smile when allusion is made to my liberality. Others say it was only the eccentric act of a mad Englishman, who acted on impulse, without having any particular reason
au fond.

A. OMAN.

A Point of Conscience.

By STELLA M. DÜRING.

PROLOGUE.

THE river was "out" at Cumbledon, to use the nervous phrase of the country folks round. All the low-lying meadows along its banks were one swirling, rushing, seething mass of turbid, brown water. The melancholy trees stood waist high in it, dipping their lower branches and bringing them out again laden with trailing river-weed and straw and hay from the flooded farm-yards. A shrieking, wild October day it was, with occasional showers of cold rain coming down from the leaden sky in slanting whitish lines and the withered leaves scudding gaily on the wind.

There were not many people about. The village folks were either too apathetic or too busy to care to come down to the riverside through the rain, even though the news that Cumbledon bridge was in danger had reached them an hour ago. One or two labourers in their picturesque white smocks, one or two farmers, stolid and fatalistic, and a young man on horseback who happened to be an engineer, and who had first warned them of what would assuredly happen should the pressure of water on the piers continue, stood about at either side, but there was no crowd and no excitement.

Cumbledon bridge was built of stone, a handsome, heavy, lengthy structure, at whose many apparently superfluous arches the traveller, who saw the dwindled river only in the summer was apt to stare in some astonishment. But many though the arches were, and wide as was their span, the angry water to-day sought a passage in vain. The umber-coloured billows mounted moment by moment higher and higher against the broad stonework of the parapet and it shivered again under their weight.

Some hundred yards along the lane leading steeply up from the water's edge was a house, deeply buried in trees and enclosed by a high wall. An old stone horse-block stood near the handsome gates and on the mossy horse-block stood a woman, a young, slender, graceful woman, as even her enveloping grey wrap could not quite conceal. She was watching with vivid and eager interest the little group of men down by the doomed bridge, and so absorbed was she that she never heard the dull thud of a horse's hoof in the damp lane behind her, was unaware

of the approaching horseman till he was close upon her. Then she turned and looked at him, one full, straight look. He saw a delicate, beautiful head, gleaming jewel-like from its setting of cloudy grey; and she, a powerfully built man of about middle height, whose dark, stern face had been what women call "divinely handsome," before it was seamed and lined by a trouble that had set its cruel mark there all too plainly.

What was it gleamed across those two faces, pale in the livid light of the long, yellow cloudbreak before them? Startled recognition—passionate gladness—fear—horror? The woman sprang down from the stone and with a sharp cry held out both her arms.

"Robert!" she said, her voice low, clear, thrilling—"Robert!"

And he? He turned his head away in stern and cruel wrath, his eyelids lowered coldly over his angry, mournful eyes, his loose reins tightened in his hand and, at a sharp touch from his spur, his horse sprang away down the stony, muddy lane as though he too would put all the distance possible between his master and the eager, outstretched hands of that woman standing in the road, her sunny hair all blown back from her face, her soft, grey draperies floating on the wild, wet wind.

Perhaps, had it not been for that startling recognition, he might have noticed the faces of the men as he passed them at the foot of the bridge, have heard the warning shout as his horse dashed on. He heard nothing but that one wild cry, "Robert! Oh, Robert!"

She had followed him. He set his teeth hard below his sweeping moustache.

"How *dare* she!" he muttered, half aloud.

His horse gained the centre of the bridge, it was the last straw. Suddenly he felt the ground rock and shiver beneath the animal's feet, and realizing the danger too late, threw him sharply back on his haunches. There was a confused shouting from the group of men behind and before him. He drew his feet from his stirrups in that momentary pause. No one could reach him, he stood there alone not many feet from perfect safety. Then came a yawning crack in the roadway to one side of him, a heaving, settling forward plunge of the ground on which he stood, a rushing roar of sliding masonry and whirling water, and man and horse were thrown far into the eddying, creaming, brown river.

The search was kept up far into the night, but that luckless horseman and his horse were never seen again.

"I be shure he be dead, I be!" said one drawling rustic, peering with troubled eyes into the turbid flood ere he again cast his primitive, three-pointed drag. "He be ander the stoans, he be, I'm shure!"

The young engineer who had seen the catastrophe did not contradict his idea—it was only too likely.

"Did you see who it was, Baggetts?" he asked quietly.

"No!" said Baggetts, a gleam of intelligence playing over his bovine countenance. "Was he bekknown to you, sur?"

"Yes, a little! It was young Squire Mansfield, from over Cassiter Hill."

"No, for shure!" said Baggetts. "Well, he be ander the stoans, he be! or we'd 'a' lighted on him bevor now, we s'uld!"

"Yes!" said his companion, with quiet conviction, "we should!"

I.

"I THINK it will be a gay Commemoration!"

"Well, you see, when Royalty honours us with a visit the least we can do is our best to entertain them."

It was Show Sunday. Year after year we are told that the promenade in the Broad Walk is nothing to what it used to be. If the quality of that time-honoured ceremonial has deteriorated as steadily as is represented, it is by this time in a painful state of decadence. The tall, slight girl, who prophesied so hopefully a gay Commemoration, was, however, fortunately unable to compare the present function with past ones, and to her eager, interested eyes the pretty scene wanted nothing. It was a sunny June evening, with just sufficient breeze to show the silver under-sides of the elm leaves and an occasional cloud to throw into pleasant contrast the succeeding bursts of warm, yellow light. But the sunshine was nearly gone now and the ends of the venerable avenue had begun to look indistinct and misty.

"It is getting dark! We shall have to go in!" said the tall girl with a sigh of unmistakeable regret. "Can you see Granny?"

"She is not far off! I saw her and Algy sitting down not a moment ago! But it is early yet to talk of going in! The moon will be up before nine! Can't we wait for her?"

"No, Mr. Meadows, Granny doesn't appreciate the moon!" and Miss Forrester looked at her companion a little curiously as

she smiled at the suggestion. Coming from anyone but Mr. Meadows it would have sounded sentimental, but sentiment and Mr. Meadows were a little hard to reconcile.

"Well, we will look for Mrs. Forrester as we come down again! After all this is not a very intellectual observance, is it?" he said, as once again they joined the slow stream of gaily dressed women, gorgeous doctors and undergrads in all the conscious pride of cap and gown. Leslie Forrester opened her eyes a little wider as she looked up at her friend. They were very lovely eyes, soft and clear and darkly blue.

"Unintellectual! Is it? Oh, but wouldn't you be sorry to see it done away with?" leaving the disagreeable main question for a side issue at a bound, as a woman will.

"Are you a Conservative, Miss Forrester?"

"Yes, are not you?"

"In all things?"

"I hope so!" with unmistakeable decision.

"One of those happy people to whom whatever is, is right?" —with a tinge of bitterness.

"No, Mr. Meadows! — but — I would rather be one to whom whatever is—is right, than one to whom whatever is—is wrong?"

"Keep your belief in the world, Leslie! —or, at any rate, don't let me shake it."

He spoke after a slight pause and in the tone Leslie least liked to hear—the tone that reminded her most forcibly of his seniority which was considerable—the tone that seemed almost to reduce to an absurdity the idea of friendship between them, a friendship she had secretly begun to regard as her proudest possession.

"Oh, there is Algy! —and Granny—and that dreadful lisping Mr. Donnithorpe and three or four others! We shall have to go in, Mr. Meadows. Will you come too?"

"No, thank you, not to-night! I am a little too old for Algy's friends. Where are you staying?"

"In the High. Almost opposite St. Mary's. *Won't* you come in?"

"No, thank you, dear, not to-night."

Leslie's heart sprang at the little unconscious, caressing word and then sank again—it was only because he was so much older.

"What are your plans for to-morrow?" she asked. "We have none, except, of course, the boat procession in the evening. Algy will be in his glory. You will come and see him?"

Mr. Meadows smiled a little mournfully at the girl's frank anxiety.

"I shall find you on the Magdalen barge?"

His eyes rested on her face with gentle gravity, and something in them gave Leslie a slight shock. Then he greeted Algy's friends a little stiffly and grandmama a little awkwardly—he was never quite at his ease with grandmama—and went. Miss Forrester watched him thread his way in and out of the crowd till the varying groups of men and girls hid his broad shoulders and well-set head from sight, and then with an effort brought her wandering attention to bear on Mr. Donnisthorpe's airy nothings.

"Tho glad that Algy hath been tho thuccethful!—aw—he detherth it—aw—more than any fellah I know!—aw—wath quite afraid he'd do too much, you know!—overtrain—and that thort of thing! but he lookth well, don't you think tho?"

Mr. Donnisthorpe had found out some time ago that the surest way to hold the attention of Algy's pretty sister was to talk about Algy himself. But his well-meant efforts hardly met to-night with the success they deserved. Leslie's mind flew at once not to Algy's proud position at the head of the river, but to his position on the recent examination list, which was not by any means so enviable.

"Do you think he *has* overworked himself?" she asked anxiously. "Perhaps that accounts for his not—doing better!"

Mr. Donnisthorpe opened his mild blue eyes and stared. How could any fellow do better than help to place his eight at the head of the river? Glorious distinction! What was any honour Alma Mater could bestow compared with that? With a sudden smile Leslie realized their different standpoints.

"His eight!—oh, yes—I forgot!"—Mr. Donnisthorpe's surprise lengthened all his face! How could any one forget? "We are going to see the Magdalen boat saluted to-morrow—aren't we?—and so is Mr. Meadows!" she added to herself, to which reflection, had poor Mr. Donnisthorpe only known it, he owed the brilliant smile that made him happy for the remainder of the evening.

II.

"It is a pretty sight!"

So Leslie from the top of Magdalen barge, her white-robed figure drawn to its full height, her pretty hands resting lightly

on the rail before her, her bright face turned in the direction of Ifley, whence the expected eights were surely coming.

It was a pretty sight. Mr. Meadows' eyes took in everything—sparkling water, pretty women, fluttering flags, gaily painted barges, excited, eager undergraduates. He was thirty-five, but it did not seem long since he had been one of them and one amongst the most eager. The strains of one of Strauss' loveliest waltzes came softly over the water from University barge, beside which, his stalwart shoulders decorated with the black and white colours of his college, his manly heart beating madly with excitement, swelling high with pride, sat Algy and his seven brethren in their victorious boat, waiting to receive the homage of their weaker or less fortunate fellows.

"Can you see him?"

Leslie craned her slender neck over the barge side to the manifest danger of her equilibrium. Mr. Meadows' hand came down on hers for a moment and Granny said, "My dear, do be more careful!" with a momentary loss of her usual tranquillity.

"You can see him if you stand up here!"—and as he spoke Mr. Meadows stepped lightly on to a bench and gave Leslie his hand. "See! here comes the first eight!"—a muffled roar from the serried ranks of citizens on the towing path emphasized his words.

"When my little lad is old enough he shall go to Magdalen! I was there, you know!"

Leslie's eyes darkened slightly with surprise. She had never heard of his little lad before!

"Where is he now?" she asked softly.

"At Eton! he is only nine, poor little chap! I should like to take you down there to see him some day! Would you go, Leslie?"

His voice was quiet, his manner almost cold, but Leslie felt all that was meant by that simple little question, and so did grandmama, who was not as comfortably out of earshot as Mr. Meadows imagined. That quiet little question!—how it thrilled both his hearers!—Leslie with the soft delicious certainty of what she had suspected more than once or twice lately, grandmama with the disagreeable conviction that she really knew very little of Mr. Meadows, far too little to render it in any way desirable that he should make love to Leslie. Grandmama was half inclined to think she had been a little remiss in her guardianship—a little mistaken, perhaps, in being the most vigilant of duennas

where Algy's boyish friends were concerned, and seeing no danger in the companionship of a "really very delightful" man like Mr. Meadows, simply because he happened to be fifteen years the girl's senior. And her knowledge of this man extended only as far as this—that he was very nice-looking, that he had, as far as appearances went, any amount of money, that his manners were irreproachable, and, thanks to the sharpness of her ears this afternoon, that he had a little boy at Eton! Grandmama resolved to extend her knowledge forthwith. Accordingly when the first vivid interest in the saluting crews had evaporated and Leslie and Mr. Meadows stepped down from their perch, she saluted him with the gentle and leading query, "Is your little boy happy at school, then, Mr. Meadows?" a question, to judge by his blank face, that evidently took him a good deal aback.

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Forrester, he is quite happy!"

"Is he your only child?" continued grandmama sweetly.

"Yes, my only one!"

"Dear me! your wife must be a little lonely—isn't she—with you away and her little boy at school?" It was a bold stroke. Grandmama quite complimented herself on her diplomacy. After all she was not quite sure there *was* no Mrs. Meadows! Mr. Meadows evidently did not like his catechism. His face darkened, and when he answered it was with some hesitation.

"I have no wife, Mrs. Forrester!"

Grandmama was nothing daunted, and very much relieved.

"Really! Then you are a widower—how sad! You see, you never mentioned it until this afternoon, and of course we did not like to ask——!"

If Mr. Meadows' face had been dark before, it blackened now. He turned and faced grandmama suddenly, stopped her in the middle of her gentle commiserations.

"I did not *say* that I was a widower, madam!" and then he stared moodily across the rippling river and plainly declined to gratify any more undue curiosity.

Leslie, leaning lightly on the rail before her, her eyes on the glittering waterway, was simply puzzled. Grandmama began to fan herself a little hurriedly, and the movements of her fan betrayed excitement, consternation, and as much anger as the gentle, old lady was capable of feeling. Really it was very shocking—very! Of course she knew that that sort of thing

did happen, but he need not have sent the unfortunate little fellow to Eton—that was in grandmama's eyes his crowning sin. And of course his regrettable intimacy with Leslie must be broken off at once, on that point there could be no hesitation. The pity was that if any one suffered through her culpable want of foresight and care, it would probably be Leslie, and Leslie was hardly the kind of girl to suffer quietly. If that dangerous man had made the impression grandmama half suspected, there would be trouble in the near future for her.

The show was over, the homage paid. A score of vigorous young fellows in flannels were disporting themselves like fishes in the water to the huge amusement of the citizens, and young and old, gentle and simple, were turning their faces homewards when grandmama awoke from her perplexed reverie to find Leslie cordially inviting her objectionable cavalier to tea. Grandmama interfered, and her interference was a little too hurried to be quite politic.

"My dear, remember that Mrs. Alwyn calls for you at seven this evening."

"To take me to the ball at Magdalen! Yes, Granny dear, that is exactly it! Mr. Meadows is going, and she may just as well take him too!"

Granny's pretty old face plainly expressed her disapproval. Really Leslie's frank encouragement of her unwelcome suitor was most unfortunate! It had never struck her before as it struck her now! Mr. Meadows was a very sensitive man, and he only looked once at grandmama.

"Thank you very much, Miss Forrester, but I have an engagement! I will come if possible to-night"—hurried irresistibly forward by the frank disappointment in Leslie's eyes—"but if I am not there you will know I have been detained, and I shall see you at the flower show to-morrow—Trinity, isn't it? You will be there?"

"Oh, yes! Well, good-bye, Mr. Meadows, till to-morrow!"

And three people during the next five minutes made resolutions with a decision that bordered on obstinacy. "I am afraid Granny does not like Mr. Meadows as much as she did!" mused Leslie, "and I like him better! If he asks me to go down to Eton again, I think I shall go!" "I must speak to Leslie to-night!" decided grandmama, "this must be put a stop to at once. She must on no account go down to Eton with Mr. Meadows!"

"There is nothing for it now but to speak out!" said Mr. Meadows to himself, as he walked steadily up the straight avenue of young poplars and beeches, with the crowded riverside behind him and the beautiful archway of the new buildings in front—and he hardly looked as if the prospect of speaking out afforded him unmixed satisfaction.

III.

It was night. The soft, summer moon and faint, white stars looked down upon the gardens of Magdalen College, upon the sleeping flower-beds in their unwonted setting of jewel-like lamps, on the soft, grey front of the old buildings and the harsher tones of the new, on Leslie in her clinging white robes, and on her dark-faced cavalier as they paced soberly up and down the flagged terrace.

The hush and the flower-scented dusk were pleasant after the heated ball-room, with its crowds of laughing, happy-faced youths and maidens. Leslie's pulses were beating evenly and happily. It was good to be young, to be alive, to be walking in the clear half-dark with her hand on Robert Meadows' arm, conscious of little beside the pleasure of her friendship and the presence of her friend. Grandmama had had not a moment in which she could cloud her perfect confidence in him by giving utterance to her new-born misgivings. No note of mistrust or suspicion marred the perfect harmony of the girl's own consciousness. If he were only not quite so silent, *quite* so grave!

A handsome, smiling lad, followed by two or three of his friends, dashed through the narrow arched passage on to the terrace.

"He is looking for me!" said Leslie, a faint note of regret in her voice. They were on the gravelled walk at the lower end of the garden. The small, iron gate leading into Addison's Walk was open and not a yard away. Leslie felt her hand held jealously within the strong arm on which it rested, and the next moment the moonlight fell on her bare head through a screen of quivering leaves; they had turned into the Walk.

On and on they walked through the flickering light and shadow. Leslie's heart began to beat and her pulses to thrill with a vague, sweet, terrible trouble born of the sighing of the trees and the ripple of the water, the delicious hush of the night and the thought-charged silence of her companion. They had left the one or two scattered smokers far in the rear. The soft,

beamly vista stretched to eternity before and behind them when, with swift, intuitive dread of the approaching crisis, Leslie hesitated and paused. Meadows looked straight into her eyes.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

"No, not with you!"—in an oppressed whisper—"it is only the silence!"

"If you will sit down there," indicating a bench where the path makes an abrupt turn. "I have plenty to say! Will you hear it?"

"Surely"—with sweetest gravity.

Leslie felt the effort with which he had spoken through every nerve of her body. What was she to hear? What was he bracing his mind to tell her? Not only that he loved her. Leslie felt now that she had known that from the first. That would not cloud his brow and harden his mouth. And it was not, it could not be, doubt of her feeling for him that brought that agony of uncertainty into his eyes. Leslie laid her hand gently on his arm, and as she raised her questioning eyes to his—that her heart, in the pure pride of its maidenly devotion, lay bare to him, was nothing to her—his trouble—it was trouble—all!

But Leslie's eyes were too much for him. He had hardly dared to hope the half of what they told him, and the sudden certainty scattered all his self-command. In another instant the girl lay trembling in his arms, his dark cheek pressed to hers, and for one bewildering moment past and present, time and eternity, ceased to exist for those two.

"You knew," he breathed.

"I guessed—a little!"

"And you don't mind?"

"Mind what?"

"A plain-looking, middle-aged man with a little boy at Eton?"

"Not when he is—you!" with a laugh that was dangerously near tears. And then they kissed each other, and Leslie drew herself away from his arm and wrapped her burnous about her, for she shivered slightly, though the night was warm, and looked out with wonder in her eyes at life under the changed conditions that the last few moments had brought.

The clock in the Cardinal's Tower, rising tall and majestic in the distance, rang out ten musical strokes. The moon turned the periwinkle leaves that bordered the path to sprays of frosted silver, and powdered Leslie's hair and lent an added radiance to

her face. Mr. Meadows passed his hand lightly over the soft ripples of that hair, and the shadow crept back into his eyes again. He had not said all he had to say yet, and how would it be afterwards? Might he lose her even now? The scent of the white roses Leslie wore floated about him; the pretty head came back to his shoulder like a bird to its nest. He thought of her strict training, of the scrupulous, almost stern, conscientiousness he had marvelled at and worshipped. How would it be with him afterwards?

"You knew that I had been married, Leslie?"

"Yes, there is the little boy, you know."

"It is that I wish to speak about. I have something to tell you. My wife was a very beautiful woman. When we were first married I loved her devotedly, but—it is hard to tell, Leslie!"

It was hard to tell, hard to rake up the five-years-buried bitterness that turned his blood to flame as he recalled it, hard to render neither more nor less than justice to the woman who had shadowed his life. Leslie slipped her hand into his and forbore to look at his face.

"She was not a good woman, I cannot explain further, dear. Perhaps if she had cared for me, if I had been a little more gentle, more patient, things might have been different. But I'm afraid I was harsh with her, and she did not love me well enough to care to alter. After Ted was born she went to the bad altogether."

"Poor thing!" said Leslie softly.

To possess his love, and lose it; to owe him wifely duty, and fail; she might well say, "Poor thing!"

"I was to blame," Meadows went on, his deep voice a little roughened. "I left her too much to herself. She—home was hateful to me—I was never there when I could avoid it. Naturally before long it grew hateful to her too! She—went away and left me."

He told his story with almost painful simplicity. Leslie did not fully comprehend the significance of the bald little sentence that held the tragedy of his life.

"And did you—find her again?"

"There was no need to look for her. She made no secret of where she was!"

"What did you do?"

"I got a divorce!"

A thrill passed right through Leslie. Now she understood.

Meadows bent his head on his hand and went on moodily, his eyes turned away from the sweet embodied sympathy beside him.

"I hoped he would marry her, but he didn't, the hound! He left her—abroad—in poverty. Then she came back to me."

The soft hand in his tightened its hold of his strong fingers. He raised it to his lips and went on with his story.

"I—provided for her. After all she had been my wife and I could do no less. But I would not see her. I don't think she expected it—or wished it. It was more than I could do."

"And did you never see her again?"

"Yes, once. I was riding and she spoke to me. I did a cowardly thing that day, Leslie."

"No!" said Leslie, with entire conviction.

"Yes, I did. I hated her, I hated myself—everybody. I was a marked man, pitied or at least noticed by every one. I wished I was dead and out of it all. There was an accident. Part of a bridge gave way as I rode over it. I was thrown into the water, and every one thought I was drowned. I've let them think so ever since."

"And your property?" Leslie asked, after she had mastered her astonishment.

"It is saving up for the little lad, I expect. I had plenty of money, as it happened, in my own hands. There was no difficulty. I shall have to come to life again some day, I suppose"—with a moody smile—"I feel as if I'd been rather a fool now, but the temptation was strong. It seemed as if I could leave my follies and wrongs, with my identity and my name, at the bottom of the river."

"Then you are not——!"

"Yes, I am! Robert Meadows Mansfield, with all his troubles on his head again. O, Leslie! my little Leslie! this has made no difference to you. You don't take your hand away; your eyes still meet mine. If you knew how I have dreaded this moment, how I have wondered whether she—that woman who was once my wife—would still have the power to strip my life of all that is good——"

He was growing a little incoherent in the relief from his long fear. Leslie slipped a hand about his neck and checked him.

"And is it any reason, that you have been unhappy, why I should not love you?"

"Then you will marry me, Leslie? no superstitious scruple, no strained point of conscience need stand between us?"

Leslie smiled up into his pale, moved face.

"What should? Did you think I should be afraid to marry a man who has been—drowned. Oh, Robert," she whispered, as he held her close to his heart, "God is so good, we are so happy, you and I. Let us think kindly of all the world, even of the poor, unhappy woman who married you. Think what she must have suffered—the more wicked she was, the worse it would be—for her. Oh! she must have suffered bitterly—before she died."

A shock passed through Meadows' whole frame. "Before she died." Was it possible that the frail bark of his hopes was still among the shoals and quicksands! Had he rejoiced, even though it was with trembling, too soon?

"Leslie!" he said—and his voice was hoarse and his lips were cold—"did you think she was dead?"

"Is she *not* dead?"

"No!" he said curtly.

"Oh the little more and how much it is,
And the little less and what miles away."

They had not moved—his arms were still about her, her head still rested on his breast. But was this Leslie?—this pale, wide-eyed woman with the interlocked fingers and the set white lips? Where was his rosy smiling love of five seconds before?

"Leslie!" he said, laying his cheek on hers that she might not see the suspense in his eyes—whispering that she might not hear the fear in his voice—"She is nothing to us! She was dead to me five years ago! All that is as if it had never been."

"It cannot be, as though it had never been. Your wife—is alive."

"I have no wife!" his voice rising in passionate protest. "She forfeited her claim to that title five years ago. She is nothing to me more than the beggar in the street. I support her as I might support any other woman whose beauty and whose sins appealed to my compassion. Leslie, I am a free man, thank God."

"Not free—to marry again."

A chill sense of defeat and despair settled down over Robert Meadows. This beautiful child in his arms that he could crush as he might a butterfly, so slender, so feminine, so frail—so inflexible where the grim abstraction called Conscience asserted its claims. With a horrible sense of impotence he pleaded his cause again.

"Leslie, think what you are saying. Don't risk my happiness—and your own—if you love me—for the sake of a mistaken idea born of wrong teaching. I am free, in the eyes of God and

man. All law is on my side. Her own act undid the bond that united us. She is no longer any wife of mine. Our marriage is as if it never had been. *You* will be my wife—worshipped, idolized as never wife was yet.”

Yes—for the very qualities that would assuredly separate her from him. She clung to him for a moment and then burst into tears.

“Oh, Robert, you will think I don’t love you. How can I make you understand that I do when I cannot do what you wish. Don’t think me unreasonable, don’t think I blame you in any way. You are right, dear, in what you have asked, I know. You are free in the eyes of the law, I know. But for me it would be wrong. That woman, while she lives, would always be your wife. I never should. To others, differently taught, it would be different, but for me it would be a sin. She has cut herself adrift from you—yes, I know. She can claim nothing from you. But as long as she lives nothing can alter the fact that she has been your wife—that she is your wife—till she dies.”

Leslie’s voice died away. Meadows was intensely still. He spoke after a long pause.

“Leslie, you are only a girl. Your ideas, as you would be the first to acknowledge yourself, are youthful, and you will find occasion to correct and alter many of them. Think, dear, is it not possible that you are mistaken here? Marriages, if, as you say, they are for all time, must also be for all eternity. If nothing can dissolve a marriage here, nothing can dissolve it hereafter. In that case no man should marry again even if his wife were dead.”

“That is different,” said Leslie quickly.

“Then do you consider that all people who have married divorced men or women are living sinful lives?”

“No, Robert, they feel differently—to them it is right.”

“Then have you”—smiling at her with some little bitterness—“a little law all to yourself that shall specially prevent your marrying me?”

The tears dropped thick and fast through Leslie’s fingers. That was how she had been afraid he would take it. Oh, it was so difficult to make him understand that, even though she loved him with her whole heart, she could not do this thing. He sprang up from his seat and began to pace rapidly up and down the gravelled space before her. Her position was illogical—ridiculous—but she was terribly in earnest, and, mistaken or no,

that fair, pale girl, over whom his heart yearned through all its rising anger, was capable of setting aside not only his happiness but her own for an abstract conception of duty. How he loved her; even while she sacrificed him for an idea that to his mind was strained—absurd. How different she was! how different!

“Robert!” her eyes were beseeching but her voice was low and steady. He took her hand and listened. “If I were a woman of a different religion from your own, you would bear with me and not insist on my doing anything I thought was wrong. You would be patient with my mistaken ideas!”

“Yes, if they did not happen to separate you from me, I might.”

“But if they *did*—if, as is the case, I could not think a thing right—could you not understand?”

He turned away in sudden anger.

“I can understand one thing without any difficulty. You never had any affection for me worthy the name or you could not calmly throw me over for a sentiment in this way. Keep your fetish! you love it better than ever you did me!”

Her eyes followed him in dumb appeal. His anger was terrible to her. He threw himself down beside her and took her in his arms once more.

“Forgive me! I was a brute! I have frightened you! But you hurt me so I hardly knew what I said. If I had asked you to do anything really wrong I could have understood.”

Leslie trembled from head to foot, but she had conquered her tears. When she spoke again her voice was faint and weary—it was growing almost too much for her.

“Robert, to me it would be a sin. I have been brought up to think so. To me it would mean no marriage—I should come to you guilty and ashamed. Is it not better to live apart always than to feel that one has done wrong. Oh!”—with a sudden bitter cry as she hid her face on his breast—“don’t make it any harder for me! You are a man and stronger than I am; don’t let me do what I believe to be wrong for the sake of being happy! Oh, Robert, help me!”

Then the heroism of the man came out. Then was Leslie’s love justified. Another prayer and she would have yielded. Meadows set his lips hard, and as he held her against his heart he made his resolve. By no word of his should she be drawn aside from what she believed to be duty. Never would he have to

reproach himself that, through him, even a fancied stain rested on the whiteness of this severe innocence.

"God help us both!" he said huskily—"we will do what is right as far as we see it! Come, Leslie, we must go in."

In silence the Long Walk was retrodden. The wind moaned softly through the tree tops, the moon was setting chilly in a silver haze. In silence they walked down the beautiful High Street; grandmama had needed no second bidding when she saw Leslie's face. The hooded, satin-slippered, merry-faced girls passed and repassed them as she walked under the shadow of the venerable buildings. Leslie looked at them in dull wonder, an hour ago she had been one of them. By St. Mary's beautiful porch Meadows paused. So much he had allowed himself—to come thus far with his lost darling in silence. He could pledge himself to that at least. Now he raised her face in the shade.

"This, then, is good-bye, Leslie!"

Once again they kissed each other and then they crossed and Leslie left him. Grandmama looked after the white figure as it flitted silently up the wide stair with an unusual brightness in her pretty old eyes, and was not surprised to hear that Mr. Meadows would not be at the flower show on the morrow.

"He has told her about the little boy!" decided grandmama as she bade him good-bye with more regret than she had expected to feel. "I might have trusted Leslie."

EPILOGUE.

A YEAR had passed away, and Meadows had kept his resolution of in no way seeking to shake Leslie's decision. A weary, lonely, desolate year it had been. He had gone abroad—that refuge of all the distressed in mind—and had come back a little more melancholy than he went, determined, at least, upon one thing, that he would put an end to the weak-minded silence he had kept as to his whereabouts, and would go back to his home and his duties.

"Neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Can wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been."

That he felt to the full. But he would no longer be guilty of the cowardly shift of running away from his troubles. He would face them like a man, and live the best life that was possible to him, since the wickedness of one woman and the goodness of another alike made happiness an impossibility.

Once again the brown horse and his rider came down the stony, rutty lane that led to Cumbledon bridge—an impulse that he could not account for leading him past the gates of the woman who had once borne his name. But to-day there was no slender, grey-robed watcher on the mossy horse-block, no appealing cry that should ring in his ears for days. There was no stone bridge either, only a temporary wooden platform supported by barges placed side by side across the stream. And on the wooden structure stood Baggetts, stolidly watching the swirl of the water about the submerged masonry. Baggetts looked up as the horse's hoofs echoed on the bridge, and his jaw dropped suddenly.

"Be you t' squire, or be you t' squire's ghoast?" he found courage to demand, as the substantial nature of his neighbour's horse, at least, was made evident by the swaying and rocking of the woodwork.

"I'm the squire himself, my good fellow!" tossing him half-a-crown by way of collecting his wits; "why shouldn't I be?"

"Loard 'a marcy! How did ye get aart o' th' waarter?" Baggetts was still aghast and tremulous.

"Swam out, of course!" with an irritated laugh. Would all his explanations be as stupidly vexatious?

"Then the stoan be arl a loie!"

"What stone?"

"Th' stoan i' the churchyard!"

Baggetts pointed up the hill towards the fine old parish church some mile or so away. Meadows turned short away, shook his rein and clattered up the stony road towards it. This was worse than he had expected. Had they really put a stone up to his memory? Awkward as the situation was he could not help smiling; it was not often a man criticised his own monument. He hitched his horse to the lych-gate, and made his way over the graves towards the tall, brand-new, conspicuous monolith that was to keep his memory green in the minds of his fellow men. And this—oh, that wasted year!—this was what he read:

"In grateful and affectionate remembrance of Robert Meadows Mansfield, of Cassiter Hall, who was drowned by the fall of Cumbledon Bridge, Oct. 12th, 1884, this stone is erected by his tenantry.

"Also to the memory of Liliias, his wife, who met her death at the same time by the same accident.

"Requiescat in pace."

"A Rough Awakening."

"From the age of fourteen years women are flattered and worshipped by men. Seeing thus that there is nothing else for them but to serve the pleasure of man, they begin to beautify themselves, and to place all their hopes in this. It were well, then, that they should perceive themselves to be prized for nothing else than modesty and decorum."—*Epicetetus*.

IT was when we went to see my brother Claude in Milan, after his severe illness, that he told us the following singular, but perfectly true, story.

One lovely evening in September we were all three walking down the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, one of the finest arcades in Europe, when we saw a striking-looking woman approaching.

"By Jove!" said Claude, "if that doesn't look like 'la belle Américaine.' I hope to goodness she hasn't returned to her old haunts."

"Why, who is she?" said I; but there was no time for a reply before we met.

I saw the colour mount to his face, and I looked keenly at the fresh comer. As we passed she shot such a look of deadly hatred at Claude that I did not wonder he looked a trifle discomposed, and even Guy couldn't help saying, "What a striking-looking woman! but what have you done to her, old man?—she looked as if she would like to plant a dagger under one of your ribs, not too far off the heart to be effectual."

And a striking-looking woman she was, tall, fair, with masses of golden hair wound round and round a most shapely head, large, well-opened blue eyes, with just a suspicion of cruelty in their still depths, and the most wonderful complexion I ever saw; yes, I say it advisedly, the most marvellous complexion it has ever been my lot to see.

"She would not only like to stab me, but has tried to perform that feat," replied Claude, with a grim smile.

"That lovely-looking creature! Oh! surely you must be mistaken," I exclaimed.

"Hardly a thing to make a mistake about. But I don't wonder she hates me. I stopped her from being an English viscountess; and no doubt she owes me one for that."

"But how did you manage to prevent it?" I asked.

"Well, it is rather a long story," replied Claude, "and as you are a trifle tired with your sight-seeing—the Ambrosian library

is enough to take it out of any one—suppose we wait till we get back to the Hotel Puzzi, and then you shall have a true account of what I did two years ago. It gained me Miss Lincoln's undying hatred, but a certain Viscount's father and mother bless me for it to this day."

I was not sorry to wait a little for the story, for we had had a very fatiguing day. Claude wanted me to see everything. "I should be so vexed," he said, "when I got back to England, if I did not take advantage of the opportunity we now had of doing Milano thoroughly." So that morning we had gazed for hours at the marvellous missals, the precious curios, the wonderful relics, and the enormous mass of books the grand old library contained.

During dinner I kept wondering what the story could be that Claude was going to tell us ; but at last the final course was served, and we were snugly esconced in our sitting-room upstairs, waiting in happiest mood for the tale which was to be unfolded to us.

You know (said Claude), when I came to Milan first I lodged at the Casa Romani, a lovely old palace in the Via Monforte belonging to the Countess Romani. Her husband was dead, and the family very much impoverished, so, to increase her income, she let some of the rooms of the old Casa to about a dozen students who were studying music and painting in the musical city.

Amongst others who had rooms in the Casa Romani was this American, whom we met in the Galleria to-day, and her old nurse, a wizened old body, who might have been any age—perhaps she aged early ! Anyhow, Miss Lincoln never went anywhere without her, and seemed to have a kind of animal affection for her chaperon.

Those who lodged with the old Contessa of course looked after their own commissariat, and most of them dined at the Hôtel Puzzi. The manager was very obliging, and did his best to please us, and in time it began to be a recognized thing that little tables in one part of the room were reserved at dinner for the English contingent, which also numbered among its select body several Americans, and a sprinkling of Scotch and Irish who were hoping some day to make name and fortune with their voices.

I am afraid the conversation was often very "shoppy"—who had heard the last opera by Verdi ; who was going to sing in the Mass next Sunday at the cathedral ; dear old Lamperti's last bon-mots, or crushing opinion of some would-be singer's voice ; and

who was going down to Baveno on Saturday, for the next day's service in the lovely little church in the grounds of the Villa Clara.

But we didn't mind being "shoppy;" we were all fond of each other, more or less, and looked forward to our daily meetings at the six o'clock dinner with zest.

I can't say how it began, but from the day Miss Lincoln joined our circle at dinner, a constraint seemed to fall upon both the masculine and feminine element therein. "Why on earth does she set herself up as a such a paragon of perfection?" said pretty little Marie St. Loo. "Anybody to hear her talk would think it positively sinful to use powder; and as for a faint *soupeçon* of rouge! one might as well be 'Anathema Maranatha' at once."

"Yes, but why?" remarked poor Emma Bellamy, who had a complexion like parchment, and a skin that seemed to have gone all wrong in the creases. "Why is she always going on about girls who paint or powder? Just simply to draw attention to her own matchless complexion. I wish she had a skin like mine, and then see what she would do."

"What would she do? Why paint, like all or most of us do, and not be ashamed of it either," said candid Jennie Groves. "What do you say, Mr. Morley; do you think it very horrible in women to paint?"

"Well, I think it is a moot point," said I. "If a woman is so very pallid that her face almost gives one a shock, and she thinks a touch of colour would make her more pleasant to behold, I, for one, have not a word to say against it, provided it does not injure her health, and there is no deceit and no endeavour to make capital out of the practice."

"There is not much deceit in the way the art is practised in this country," said Marie St. Loo with a laugh, "therefore it is all the more unnecessary for Miss Lincoln to be so aggressively rude about it. She said the other day that no Christian gentleman would ever use artificial means to enhance her beauty. What do you think of that?"

"I suppose she considers herself an epitome of all the Christian virtues," said Emma Bellamy indignantly, "and looks upon us as 'publicans and sinners.'"

We all laughed at poor Emma's indignation, but you may imagine from this conversation the feeling there was towards Miss Lincoln.

For my own part I could not—as her compatriots say—"reckon her up." She seemed, as the other girls said, to take her stand on a kind of pedestal, from which she viewed the world of men and women beneath her with a species of cold, calm contempt.

Why she was studying under Lamperti no one seemed to know. She had no voice, and he frequently told her so; perhaps she meant to teach when she returned to Boston, and having been a pupil of Lamperti would give her a certain amount of prestige; but, as she appeared to have plenty of money, it hardly seemed necessary for her to become a teacher. But had she plenty of money, and was the old body, whom she so ostentatiously called nurse before people, really her nurse, or was there a stronger tie between them?

You will wonder at my saying this, but one morning, as I was descending the stone staircase of the Casa, very early, the following, to me, incomprehensible words came from the half-opened doorway of Miss Lincoln's *étage*. "But, mother, you must get me some; how can I go down to Baveno without? You know how hot the sun will be on the boat; the shop will be open by now, and I cannot——" But there the door closed sharply, and I lost the rest of the sentence. What does she want her mother to get for her that she cannot get herself, I wondered; and was that "old anatomy," as one of the young fellows irreverently termed her, Miss Lincoln's mother?

If so, what a sham and a hypocrite the girl was. And then a sudden idea flashed through my brain. If she palmed off her mother as her nurse, would she not be equally capable of palming off a made-up complexion as her own, and, to divert suspicion from herself, censure those who indulged in the practice.

Then I took myself to task something after this fashion. "You don't like the girl, and therefore you are ready at the first suspicion to imagine all kinds of evil things about her. Why should you think that it was something for her face which she wished her mother to get for her?" I tried to drive the thought away, and succeeded for a time, but circumstances arose which forced me to put my thought to the test.

The next day was Saturday, and several of the students went on board with me as I started by the three o'clock boat for Baveno. It was a lovely afternoon, and we were all prepared to enjoy a delightful trip down the grand old Lago Maggiore.

Almost the first I saw on deck, quietly fanning themselves, were Miss Lincoln and her nurse-chaperon.

"Oh!" I thought, "I wonder if she has got the specific she so urgently required yesterday morning." But there was no trace of anxiety on that statuesque face; indeed she seemed rather more complacent than usual.

"Is it not lovely?" she exclaimed. "One wonders there is not a general exodus from Milan every Saturday afternoon; the intense quietness, after the noise of the streets, is so refreshing. One tries to imagine what the world would be like if we could rest content with such idyllic pleasures as these."

"The world would be a very different kind of place to live in, no doubt," I replied, "and we should escape a great deal of worry and trouble if we were more content with 'the goods the gods provide us;' but then there would be no emulation, no 'struggle for existence,' no 'survival of the fittest,' if this kind of thing prevailed."

"Very likely I am wrong," said Miss Lincoln. "Are you ambitious, Mr. Morley?" she added.

"Ambitious! of what?" I asked.

"Oh! of making a name and fortune; of being able to go where you like, and to do what you like; of having plenty of money, in fact."

"Yes, I think I am ambitious to a certain extent. I certainly should not care to live a life where the *dolce far niente* played a great part, but I do not think having plenty of money always conduces to happiness."

"It goes a very long way, though," said Miss Lincoln, with a short little laugh.

"Perhaps," I answered; "but I think there is nothing like having plenty of congenial work to do to make one happy."

A faint sneer curved her lips as she said, "That is not *my* idea of happiness."

I thought she seemed in rather a desponding, pessimistic mood, so, to turn the conversation, I said, 'Do you stay at the Hôtel de l'Europe?'

"Oh, no," she replied, "that is rather too expensive for me. I am going to stay at the Hôtel de la Paix, where my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bentley, always put up."

We had a pleasant voyage, and on reaching Baveno were

quite prepared to enjoy our dinner, before proceeding to the church for the weekly practice.

Among the congregation at the morning service I noticed a handsome, happy-looking young fellow, whom I put down at once as English. He was very devout, and listened to the sermon with more attention than did the majority of the congregation—to the stale old platitudes of the Rev. Fawcett Wegge.

With the young fellow was a man whose face had a strangely familiar look to me. Where had I met him before? It kept bothering me all the service.

The doubt was soon solved; as I was returning to the hotel to luncheon the two strangers passed, and the elder turned and looked me in the face.

"By Jove!" said he, "it's Morley. Why, what brings you here, old man? How awfully glad I am to see you."

"Why, Disney, is it you?" I replied. "I thought I had seen that old figure-head of yours somewhere before, when you appeared in church to-day; but may I ask what brings you here—have you left Rugby?"

"Yes, two years ago. I am now with Viscount Dereham as travelling tutor. Let me introduce you to each other."

We strolled on together, talking of old days and other scenes, when just at the corner of the village street I heard Lord Dereham exclaim, "What a lovely face! Did you ever see such a complexion?"

I turned to see who had caused this sudden burst of admiration, knowing intuitively, in my own mind, to whom he was alluding.

"Who is she?" he added.

"That is Miss Lincoln, a young American who is studying singing under Lamperti. We call her 'la belle Américaine,' on account of that wonderful complexion which you noticed," I replied.

Just then we met, and as I raised my hat the two men did the same. Miss Lincoln gave a quick glance at Lord Dereham—whose open admiration was ludicrously apparent—then dropped her lovely violet eyes, and with a calm bow walked on in her usual stately manner.

"Is she not beautiful?" exclaimed the young Viscount. "Why she might pose for one of the beauties of the old world. Helen of Troy or Cleopatra couldn't hold a candle to her!"

"I don't know about holding a candle to Miss Lincoln," said I, "it is a pity they didn't hold one to themselves, and make a

funeral pyre thereof, instead of setting the world on fire, as those celebrated beauties are said to have done—but Miss Lincoln is certainly very pretty."

"Pretty!" in a tone of disgust, "why, she is simply exquisite."

"There, now he is off," said Disney; "he falls in love, on an average, once in six weeks, and you may guess the time I have with him. Let us go and have luncheon, something to eat and drink is a famous panacea for incipient love."

"What an awful fib!" said the young fellow, turning crimson. "Do you know," to me, "Disney is so awfully afraid of not delivering me safe and intact to my lady mother that every girl he meets he is suspicious of, and thinks she has designs on myself and title."

"Quite right, too," said I; "you are a trifle impressionable, I should imagine."

After luncheon we took our cigars, and strolled down to the lake, to see who were going over to the islands for the usual row before afternoon service.

My favourite island was "Isola Bella," but I had been over its old palace and through the lovely gardens so often that I did not care to go again, though much pressed to do so by Marie St. Loo and Emma Bellamy, who were making up a party to go across.

Just as they pushed off Miss Lincoln and her chaperon came in sight, and when they saw the boat, hurried up, as if to catch it; but it was too late, and besides that the boat had its full complement of passengers.

"What a pity! I am so disappointed," she exclaimed, "for very likely this is my last chance of seeing the islands."

"May I be allowed?" said rather an excited voice; and then, "please introduce me," came in a determined tone from Lord Dereham, as if he expected some opposition to his request, and was bent on frustrating it.

Of course I complied; and he at once begged to be allowed to take them himself.

Disney, I could see, was dreadfully annoyed when Miss Lincoln graciously accepted the young Viscount's offer, and proposed to go with them; but I gave him a look as much as to say, "Let him have his own way now; much harm can't be done in the short time they are together," so he quietly sat down on one of the old boats, and watched them off in silence.

For a time we puffed silently at our cigarettes, till a chance word set us off, and we just revelled in reminiscences of the past; at last the silver-toned bell rang out its note of warning for the afternoon service, and I rose to go. "Shall you come with me?" I asked.

"No, I think not, I will wait a little longer for them; it is too bad of Dereham, he knows how anxious I get if he is away for long."

"But why on earth should you be anxious?" said I; "surely he is old enough to take care of himself."

"My dear fellow," said Disney, "as I said before, you have no idea how impressionable he is. I should not be at all surprised if he does not rave about that lovely woman for weeks, and perpetrate all kinds of mad actions in consequence."

"What a nuisance! He must be a dreadful responsibility for you. Adieu for the present then. I must not stay longer; but I am sorry to leave you like Patience on a boat instead of a monument; however, they can't be long now."

They were longer, though, than we had expected, and on my return I was just in time to see Lord Dereham, with much *empressement*, helping Miss Lincoln from the brilliant-hued gondola, while Disney performed the same office—without the *empressement*—for the old nurse.

"Oh! we have had such a lovely time," said the fair American. "Look at this bouquet of flowers, isn't it real elegant? One of the gardeners gave it to me. I was the only one he would cut his camellias and roses for—don't you think I must have fascinated him?" with a slightly disdainful though curious look at Disney's gloomy face.

"Humph!" was all that individual deigned to say.

Miss Lincoln turned to the young Viscount, who seemed unable to withdraw his gaze from her lovely face, and said, with a deliciously simple yet at the same time inquiring look, from out the corners of her flower-like eyes: "I hope it hasn't tired you rowing us across, I did so enjoy it; and I shall treasure these flowers always"—smelling delicately the heliotrope—"as a pleasant remembrance of a well-spent Sunday afternoon—what do you say, milord?"

"Well spent! yes, indeed," replied the young fellow. "I don't know when I have enjoyed an afternoon more; and," turning to Disney, "it hasn't been time thrown away, as your looks would seem to imply. Why, I have learnt a whole heap of history

by what I have been shown—the tree on which Napoleon cut his name before the battle of Marengo, the gloves he wore on the same momentous occasion ; and lots more. Oh ! you really ought to have come with us, Disney ; it is just the kind of place that would have interested you," and he laughed delightedly.

The tutor's face was a study ; and I wondered whether the young Viscount spoke in complete forgetfulness of how clearly he had shown he did not wish for Disney's company ; or whether he said it in a kind of mischievous *diablerie*, just for the fun of the thing.

Disney made no answer to the remark, except to say, "It is time we went back to the hotel," and walked on.

"Are you going by the same steamer to Milan?" said Miss Lincoln, addressing Lord Dereham in a soft, low voice.

"No, I wish to goodness we were ; but my tutor has made arrangements to stay here for a few days longer ; however, you may be sure," with a rising blush, which lit up his handsome young face, "I shall be in Milan as soon as ever I can persuade Mr. Disney to come."

In less than an hour we were bidding them adieu on the quay of the small landing-place which Baveno then possessed.

"I will not say 'Good bye,' then, but only 'Au revoir,' as I hope to see you soon again," said Lord Dereham, holding Miss Lincoln's daintily gloved hand, much longer than was absolutely necessary.

"We shall be delighted to see you again—at least, I can answer for myself," said the fair American, with a bewitching down-dropping of her long fringed eyelids, which, as their shadow lay on her cheeks, threw out into bold relief the lovely colouring beneath, and made her complexion, in the soft evening glow, positively dazzling.

"My!" said outspoken Emma Bellamy, as we took our seats on deck, "isn't she making the running? Poor boy! I believe he is quite bowled over already. If that tutor of his has a grain of sense in his head he will take the next train back to Paris, instead of following her to Milan."

"He certainly seemed very 'gone' upon Miss Lincoln for so short an acquaintance," I replied ; "but it is too absurd to suppose she would dream of captivating a young fellow so much her junior ; she ought to be had up for child stealing if she succeeded," I added with a laugh.

"Wait and see," said Emma. "Don't think me unkind, but I

believe that woman is dying to make a good match. She did nothing but talk about him all the time we were packing; she says he comes of age in two months, and then his rent roll will be £40,000 a year, independently of his father, and when he succeeds to the earldom it will be something enormous."

"But who told her this?" I asked. "Surely she would not question Lord Dereham on such a subject."

"Oh! that I can't say; Miss Lincoln is equal to most things in that calm *insouciant* way of hers. I don't suppose she would need to ask him; don't you know they say every American girl who hopes to get into society has Debrett at her fingers' ends?"

"Rather an unprofitable study, I should think. But you do not seem to like the Americans, Miss Bellamy."

"Yes, I do. I like Marie St. Loo, for instance—where would you find a kinder-hearted girl or a truer friend? But I can't say I have 'cottoned' to this Miss Lincoln."

"Well, let us hope that you will get to like her better the more you know her"—Emma shook her head—"and that you are mistaken in the present instance. It would be too dreadful. Fancy poor Disney's face if his pupil really fell in love with Miss Lincoln, and proposed! What a *contretemps*! Why, it would be enough to give him a fit." And at the recollection of his sober, solemn face that afternoon when Lord Dereham so quietly rowed off with the fair American, I roared with laughter.

A few days later, as I was returning from a singing lesson with dear old Lamperti, I turned into the cathedral to enjoy for a few minutes its coolness and shade. The heat outside was intense and oppressive, and as I passed up the stately nave I felt thankful I had entered. Before I had taken many steps they were arrested by the sound of a low, faint laugh which sounded familiar, and, turning to the right, there stood Miss Lincoln and Lord Dereham, criticising a marvellously coloured stained-glass window, representing St. Michael overthrowing his Satanic Majesty.

I fancied the couple looked annoyed at seeing me, but the sudden thought of how vexed poor old Disney would be, if he could know how his pupil was amusing himself made me determine to forsake the rôle of amiability by *not* effacing myself, and I determined to stay and spoil sport.

"Did I hear a faint laugh as I entered?" said I.

"Yes, I laughed at something Marie St. Loo said," replied

Miss Lincoln. "What a fund of humour that girl has! she is always saying something ridiculous; just now, before she went away, she said that wonderful statue of St. Bartholomew without his skin, and showing all his anatomy, tickled her immensely, and that she was sure Dean Swift must have seen it on a hot day like the present, or he would never have said he would 'like to get out of his skin, and sit in his bones.' Then she said she admired Il Diavolo much more than St. Michael, and if he is as beautiful as that painting depicts, she is sure she shall fall in love with him if they meet in the 'Shades.'"

"What a caution she is!" I remarked laughing; "but one can't help being amused at her."

"But don't you think it very wrong to talk in that flippant way? My people would be shocked if they knew I associated with any one who spoke lightly of sacred things; but then they are of the strictly Evangelical school; they do say my ancestors came over with the Puritan fathers," elevating her dainty little nose in the air.

"And a jolly bad lot some of them were," I could not help muttering *sotto voce*. Then a sudden thought flashed through my mind. "I see her little game; she is trying the goody-goody dodge on him. I only hope she won't succeed."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Miss Lincoln," said the Viscount, "for my mother is extremely Low Church."

"But why should you be glad?" said I. "Your mother, the Countess of Beresford, and Miss Lincoln are not likely to meet, and cannot, therefore, come into conflict over their theological opinions. You said you were returning to the States very soon, did you not?" I said, turning to his companion.

"I did, but circumstances have arisen which may prevent my going back, have they not?" letting her eyes rest on Lord Dereham with a seeming shyness in their glorious depths.

"By Jove! but this looks serious," I thought, and looked at Lord Dereham for an explanation.

"Yes, indeed! the happiest, most unexpected thing has happened for me, but can you not guess?"

"No! I never was good at guessing. The simplest riddle in the world, such as 'who killed Cain?' is always sufficient to stump me; and in this case"—with most distinct emphasis—"I have no grounds to go upon."

"Mr. Morley is not in the mood for guessing," said Miss

Lincoln, with a sweet smile, while at the same time she shot an evil glance at me from the corner of her eye the farthest from Lord Dereham ; "we will wait a more convenient opportunity."

"Not a bit of it, I want to tell him now that you have promised to be my wife, and so make me one of the happiest of men. Congratulate me."

"What! Already!" I exclaimed in astonishment; then added—with rather a poor attempt at felicitation, I am afraid—"why, certainly I congratulate *you*," looking straight at Miss Lincoln, as I used the pronoun.

"Thank you," she said with a cold smile, "though I don't think I can compliment you on the manner of your congratulations; but I trust they are sincere."

"Why, of course they are," interrupted Lord Dereham ; "don't you think I ought to be congratulated?" with a certain emphasis on the "ought."

"Does Disney know?" I said, ignoring his question.

"No, but I shall tell him immediately on my return."

"Don't hurry yourself; I shall be passing your hotel on my way back, and will drop in and see him."

"Do, there's a good fellow, and say a good word for us. I quite expect he will cut up rough at first, because he has always been so anxious that I should not get engaged till he had resigned his charge of me."

"Well, without saying a disparaging word of Miss Lincoln" (with a little bow to her), "you must allow it is rather rough, as you call it, on Disney; remember, he has to account to your parents for his stewardship."

"Oh, yes, we all know that," in a grumpy voice; "but surely a fellow has a right to please himself in the most momentous choice of his life. But," turning with a rapturous look in his blue eyes to his fair *fiancée*, "when they see her, why"—with a slight wave of his hand—"there will be nothing more to be said."

"Will there not?" thought I. "There will be a great deal more to be said before your parents consent to your marriage with an American singer, or I am very much mistaken."

"*Au revoir* for the present, then," and I walked away.

I found Disney, with a cigarette between his lips and a cup of *café noir* by his side, trying to while away the hot afternoon and the neuralgic pains which tortured him.

"Well, old man, how are you?" said I. "How delightful this room is! almost as cool as the cathedral."

"Better, thanks; but why do you mention the cathedral? Is it cool there?"

"Rather, almost as cool as some of the people who were viewing it?"

"Why, who were they? Anybody I know?"

"Yes, one or two—among them your pupil."

"With Miss Lincoln?"

"Yes"—decidedly—"very much with her."

"I knew it," said Disney, starting to his feet, "if it had not been for this damnable neuralgia we should have gone together. Well, what has happened?" turning to me almost fiercely.

"He has proposed to Miss Lincoln and been accepted."

"Good God! You don't mean it! The young fool! Why he knows absolutely nothing of her! He must be mad!"

"He is not the first man who has been mad enough to be caught by a lovely face, before waiting to find out if the inward character matched with the outward presentment," said I. "I have no doubt he thinks her faultless."

"What *will* his strait-laced old mother say when she knows?" said Disney, with a groan. "They will never receive her; you have no idea how fearfully narrow-minded and prejudiced they are. What shall I do, Morley? There will be no end of a row."

"You can do nothing but keep your eyes open, and not give him too much liberty. Is he dependent on his father?"

"No, that is the worst of it; if he were there might be some inducement for him to wait, but he has a very large income of his own, left him by an old aunt."

"Phew! that complicates matters, as, of course, if he is independent he can please himself. Well, *che sara sara*; take my advice, old man, don't worry, but keep your eyes open."

"What about to-night, are you going to La Scala?" said Disney.

"Yes, I have promised to escort Miss Bellamy and Marie St. Loo. And you?"

"I go with Dereham, but shouldn't be at all surprised if he wishes now to take some one else as well."

"Never mind, go with him just the same and you will have the delightful experience of playing 'gooseberry.'"

As we seated ourselves in the opera house, I heard a startled gasp on my right, and, turning, saw Miss Bellamy—with her mouth decidedly too open for beauty—staring at a box on the first tier.

"For goodness' sake give me an opera glass. That can't be Miss Lincoln sitting there—it is though," as she adjusted the glasses. "How on earth did she get a seat in that box? How lovely she looks in that dead white silk, without any ornaments or flowers! I don't believe any other woman's complexion in the house could stand it; that old chaperon, with the parchment-like face, makes a capital foil."

"Who is that presenting her with a bouquet?" said Marie St. Loo; "it looks like Lord Dereham."

"So it is; now, who was right?" with a triumphant ring in her voice; "didn't I say she would have his scalp?"

"It looks like it," said I, "but it may end in nothing after all."

"Only look at her face, that is enough to prove what I say; she *has* captured him, and is radiant in consequence."

I could not help owning that it seemed very probable she was right, and took a look through the glass to see how Disney was bearing himself.

His look of intense gloom was so pronounced that I could not help feeling heartily sorry for him; and thankful that I was not in his position of responsibility. On our way home, after the performance, several of the students joined us, and the one topic of conversation was the sensation "*la belle Américaine*" had created, and the lover-like attentions bestowed on her by the young Viscount.

"What a pretty woman Madlle. Muser is!" said Marie St. Loo the next morning at luncheon.

"Do you think so?" said Miss Lincoln; "I think she is greatly overrated, both as an artiste and a beauty. Who could be lovely with such great staring eyes?"

"But don't you know the reason why her eyes look so staring?" said Emma Bellamy, "it was because she had such an amount of bistre under them, and the rouge was dabbed on anyhow. I can't understand a prima donna being so careless, especially in such a place as Milan."

"I think it is a pity to paint at all for the stage," said Lord Dereham; "if no artistes did it, then it wouldn't be expected, and no face can stand it long, they say."

"Not if it is put on in the 'rough and ready' way affected by Madlle. Muser," said Miss Lincoln; "it is an art like anything else."

"Why, how do you know?" said Miss Bellamy, flashing a keen glance out of her sharp grey eyes; "you have never been on the stage yet, so don't need to paint."

"Certainly not; but I have heard my friends in America, when they were personating characters at fancy dress balls, discussing the practice. For my own part I should never dream of employing artificial means of any kind," and she looked haughtily at Miss Bellamy.

"I am sure you would not," exclaimed Lord Dereham; "anything that savours of deceit must be as abhorrent to you as it is to me."

"Oh! that's all very well," said the irrepressible Emma, "but I see no harm in painting when it is done openly, like it is in this country; it is when people deny the 'soft impeachment' that I think it's so horridly mean."

"I quite agree with you," said Lord Dereham; "I would never trust a person again if I found them acting so deceitfully."

We were all amused at the warmth with which he expressed himself, as the subject seemed too trivial, to most of us, to get excited about; but happening to glance at Miss Lincoln, I was startled to see the change in her face.

"Humph?" thought I, "is she going to faint? She has gone white even to her lips," and then it struck me as odd that she still retained a faint rose flush of colour on her cheeks.

"Don't you feel well?" I asked; "I hope you are not going to faint."

"Faint, not she," said a young medico sitting near; "people don't faint with a colour in their faces, so don't be afraid."

"I am not afraid of fainting," said Miss Lincoln, rising, "perhaps the heat has affected me; I will go and lie down."

"Do," said the young Viscount, offering her his arm, "I shall be so disappointed if you can't go with us to 'La Brera' this afternoon," and he led her away lovingly.

Some of us, I am sorry to say, were amused at this episode. Miss Bellamy gave a snort of disgust, and muttered "humbug" under her breath, and Disney ground his teeth at this fresh proof of his pupil's infatuation.

"What can one do, Morley? Can't you advise a fellow?" he said.

"Come round to my rooms, and have a talk," I replied.

As we settled ourselves for a smoke, I said, "Well, it won't be for much longer now; you start for Paris on Saturday, there, with 'fresh fields and pastures new,' who can tell what may happen—he may forget all about her."

"No such luck, he has refused to leave till after next Tuesday, as it happens to be Miss Lincoln's birthday; and there is some talk about him waiting in Paris to escort her, and her chaperon to London."

"That looks serious."

"Serious! I should think it does, I can't sleep for thinking of the entanglement the foolish boy has got into. By the way, did you notice how queer she went when we were talking about women painting? I wished she painted."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because I believe he would break it off with her if she did, he has such a horror of it."

"What will you bet me she doesn't paint? What will you give me if I prove it?"

"How could you prove it? You could not accuse her openly to her face," said Disney.

"No, for she would simply deny it. I have, however, an idea in my head which, with your aid, I mean to attempt to put into practice; if it does not succeed we can only say, 'the attempt and not the deed confounds us.'"

As I unfolded my plan Disney's face cleared somewhat, and at parting he looked a little more cheerful than he had done for some time past.

The next few days flew by with lightning speed; for when I contemplated what I intended doing, a disagreeable thrill ran through all my nerves, and I felt almost inclined to back out of my promise, and tell Disney it was too risky.

However, the eventful birthday dawned, and I determined to carry out my plan, daring and wild as it seemed.

I must confess it was with no small amount of trepidation I ascended the stone staircase to Miss Lincoln's *étage*, carrying a basket of flowers for her acceptance, among which was hidden a dainty pink coral and pearl bangle, which the students had subscribed for, as a little acknowledgment of the reception she was giving them.

In a few minutes Miss Lincoln entered, and as we shook hands she said rather hurriedly, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting,

but my companion is not very well; surely that clock must be slow, or you are rather early."

"Yes," I replied, "I came rather early to bring you these before the other guests arrived," and I handed her the flowers.

"What lovely roses!" she exclaimed, "where did you get them?"

"There is something more inside," I said, as I took a low chair by the side of the lounge on which she was seated; and as I looked at her I could not help thinking how beautiful she was, and hated myself for the part I was going to play, and almost wished I should be unsuccessful—but time was getting on, and it *had* to be done.

"I hope you are feeling better," said I; "what made you look so ill the other day?"

"The heat, I think," she replied, "or else the inane chatter of that Miss Bellamy; she never seems to be able to get beyond personalities."

"Oh! come, are you not a little hard on poor Emma?"

She was only standing up for the right of every one to please themselves, even to the matter of painting their faces.

"Yes, but I think such subjects are better left alone; no good woman, who has the slightest respect for herself, would ever condescend to try and attract admiration by painting her face;" so saying she lifted the bunch of roses, and held them daintily to her nose.

"No one would imagine you did," said I; "why the roses just match the lovely colour on your face," and at the same moment drew my handkerchief—which I had previously carefully saturated with eau de cologne—quickly down the cheek that was nearest to me.

It was done! and not until she sprang to her feet, nearly knocking me over in her excitement, did I realize the importance of the action I had taken, for there, on the fair white cambric, lay a long streak of the loveliest carmine, and as I held it, the streak widened, running into the soaked handkerchief, and bearing silent witness to the lie of which the angry woman before me had been guilty.

"How dare you!" she gasped, "how dare you! what right have you to insult me like this?"

For the moment I was too dazed at the success of my plan to speak; but before I could say anything she caught sight of her face in the looking-glass, and seeing the appalling contrast her cheeks presented—for the strong perfume had removed every trace of colour from the one—she turned on me like a tigress,

and picking up a small Italian dagger that lay on the table near, aimed a blow at me which, if I had not caught her hand, would very likely have inflicted a dangerous, if not deadly wound.

"For shame! Miss Lincoln," I exclaimed, "would you try and stab a man who has done you no wrong?"

"Wrong!" she hissed, "you have ruined me. Oh! I could kill you with pleasure. What reason had you to suspect me? What right to interfere with me in any way?"

"The right of every honest person to expose deceit," I said undauntedly.

"Expose!" she ejaculated; "you don't mean to say"—but just then, to my intense relief, I heard footsteps on the stairs, and before Miss Lincoln could reach the door, towards which she rushed in a frantic effort to escape being seen, Disney and Lord Dereham entered, the latter remarking in a happy tone, "Well, we are in good time;" then, as his *fiancée* abruptly turned her back to him, he exclaimed, "Why, what is the matter? you are not ill again, I hope," and going towards her, he gently took her hand and tried to turn her round.

"Let me go," she said in a sharp voice, "I do not feel well," He released her instantly, and she was moving to the door, when it struck me that if she went before he saw her face my efforts to undeceive him and help Disney would be futile, so, holding out the handkerchief, I said rapidly, "The result of a bet, of which Miss Lincoln evidently does not approve."

Seeing her last chance of escaping detection gone, she turned and faced us, exclaiming beneath her teeth, "Brute!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Lord Dereham, "what is it?" then, catching sight of Miss Lincoln's face, he rushed forward, and seizing her by the shoulders held her fast, and gazed into her face with a look of incredulity it was piteous to see.

"Good God!" he ejaculated, "what has come to your face?"

"Ask rather what has come off it," I replied, drawing his attention to the pink stain on the handkerchief. I felt thoroughly disinclined for the task, but it was no good drawing back now.

"The fact is," I continued, "you have been deceived; Miss Lincoln *does* paint, although she has denied it, and it is only right and fair that you should know."

As the truth dawned on him that the woman he loved so much had cheated him from the first, his hand dropped from her

shoulders, and he flung himself, with a low groan into a chair, hiding his face in his hands, as if he could not bear to look on her despoiled loveliness.

"Oh! it is too awful! too horrible!" I heard him mutter under his breath.

Miss Lincoln stood glaring savagely at me, evidently undecided what to do, and I racked my brains how to end the situation—which was growing terribly strained—quickly.

At last I said, "Your friends will soon be here, Miss Lincoln; had you not better prepare for them? Your face, in its present condition, might strike them as bordering on the grotesque."

"Don't, don't say any more, for God's sake! I cannot bear it," said Lord Dereham, and he got up with a long, shuddering sigh.

"I am only cruel to be kind," I answered; "come, I think we had better leave Miss Lincoln to receive her guests alone."

The words seemed to arouse "*la belle Américaine*," who walked hurriedly to the door; as she opened it she turned and said, with a viciousness which fairly petrified us, "I hope to heaven I may never see one of you again!" To me she added, "Beast! how I hate you!" The door banged and she was gone.

We walked back to the hotel in complete silence, but as I shook hands, Lord Dereham said sadly, "Do not think me ungrateful, but it has been a rough and painful awakening," and as he raised his eyes to mine I saw they were full of tears, then he added, with a sob in his voice, "You don't know how intensely I loved her; indeed I thought she was all that was good and true."

"Of course you did," I replied, "and I was afraid you might think my interference unwarrantable, but I am convinced you have had a happy escape from a false and designing woman."

"Perhaps so," he said with a sigh, and then, turning quickly, he rushed up the hotel stairs, as if he could bear no more.

"Well!" said Disney, drawing a long breath, "I can hardly believe your plan has been so successful; you cannot imagine the relief it is to me, and I am sure you have earned the everlasting gratitude of Dereham's father and mother; but it was an awfully risky thing to do, and I don't know how you ever had the courage to attempt it."

"*L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace*," I exclaimed, "and in this case, I think everybody will allow, the end justified the audacity, as well as the means."

RATCLIFF HOARE.

The Blackbird in the Copse.

ACROSS the water-meadows the summer heat lay in a shimmering golden haze ; the grass was white with moon-daisies, and their satin petals flashed back a white glare into the blinding face of the sun. The river lay a streak of burnished silver between its white banks; the eye could find no rest on it save where it loitered, translucent green and russet brown, beneath the gray-blue shade of some drooping willow. The cows were grouped together in the scanty shadow afforded by the high rose-enriched hedges, gazing out dreamily over the sunlit pastures, or sleepily chewing the cud.

Down at Farmer Burford's the ducks, their toilets made, dozed by the pond ; the fowls huddled with drooping heads on the fence, or crouched with half-spread wings in the dust. In the farmyard the great sows lay peacefully dreaming in the sun-baked mire, their litters clustering around them. Silence lay upon everything, broken only by an occasional rustle and half suppressed whinny from the stables, a smothered snore from the sleeping pigs, or a crooning cluck from the fowls as they shifted their position on the fence. Above all arched the sky, deep blue, cloudless and serene, as only a June day knows it.

Further up the lane, at the little flower-embowered cottage where Miss Rose Garton lived, the same profound stillness reigned. Out at the back of the house, Jane, the servant, sat nodding on the doorstep, and the tall hollyhocks and sunflowers were all a-nodding too. In the tiny sitting-room in the front of the house Miss Rose sat knitting by the open French window, her needles moving silently to and fro amongst the fleecy white wool. Monthly roses and jasmine wreathed about the window, and tall white lilies and other sweet flowers and a great bush of rosemary grew in the flower beds below. Sometimes a rose petal would fall from an overblown flower and come drifting to her feet.

Fifty-five Junes had passed over Miss Rose Garton's head and left it as white as the snowy wool she was knitting, or the white lilies that lifted their stately crowns beside her. The years had robbed her eyes of the brightness and colour that had once made

them like a summer sky. Once her cheeks were round and pink as her own clustering roses ; now Time had laid his fingers on them and left hollows where dimples had been, and had filched the colour from them till they looked like the rose petals she collected and laid in the sun to dry, before placing them in a jar to fill her room with fragrance. Once she had been the fairest flower in the country-side, and many a man had desired to carry her away and plant her in his own heart's garden, there to tend her all his life ; but now the form that had been straight and lissom as her Madonna lilies was frail and drooping, and Time had painted the pale violet hues of sorrow and weeping beneath her eyes.

It was over twenty years since, on her father's death, she left the old rectory where she had been born and came to live alone in her little rose-covered cottage. Many had been her suitors before and after her father's death, and indeed it was well known that Squire Vernon always wanted her to marry him, and had remained single for her till the day of his death, last winter. He courted her as a young girl in her father's house, and after her father's death he had come to her again and again, so people said, and begged her to change her mind. But it was rumoured that she had lost her heart to young Harry Vernon, the Squire's brother, who left home so suddenly when she was only eighteen, and they said she had been waiting for him ever since, though it was well known from the Squire himself that Harry had disgraced his family by marrying a barmaid or something very low indeed.

Yet still she sat by her window, waiting—waiting—though Harry Vernon never came back, and the Squire died unmarried, and Time stole her beauties from her one by one, but could not steal from her the loveliness which, like the fragrance of the roses, stayed with her long after all actual charms had fled.

So she sat knitting by the open window, looking out with faded, peaceful eyes over the dazzling water-meadows, where the cattle stood motionless in the shade of the rose-hedge that lengthened imperceptibly over the grass. And the lilies gave up their richest scents to her, and the rose petals fell and drifted to her feet. Presently a great bee came buzzing about the lilies and roses ; he hummed harmlessly by Miss Rose's head, and sailed round her little room on a tour of inspection, and then came back to the lilies and crept up into a white bell with many busy

murmurs. Miss Rose's needles moved slower ; a new look came into her gentle eyes—a look of longing—as she sat gazing out into the golden sunlight. On such an afternoon—how many years ago?—a bee had buzzed thus among the lilies and roses in the old rectory garden. The knitting needles lay at rest in her delicate hands among the fleecy wool on her knees. The bee tumbled backwards out of the lily bell with a loud z-z-zz, and droned away, covered with golden pollen, to his hive in Farmer Burford's orchard. Silence settled down again over all, but Miss Rose's hands still lay idle in her lap. A white butterfly came fluttering across her vision ; there were butterflies, too—white butterflies—in the rectory garden that summer afternoon when she was young.

Suddenly from an adjacent copse, clear, sweet and rich, came the full contralto notes of a blackbird breaking upon the golden silence. They throbbed through the heated air like a passionate love song, each note speaking of boundless joy, a golden melody of delight. Slowly the tears welled up in Miss Rose's faded eyes and rolled down her cheeks. She saw a youth and maiden standing among the lilies and roses in the old rectory garden, where the bees droned, and the butterflies flitted from flower to flower, and his arms were about her, and his lips pressed to her lips, while they stood bathed in the summer sunlight with the blackbird's song telling of love, love, love, all around them There came the crunch of wheels and stumbling hoofs along the lane. Farmer Burford's wife was driving her married sister, who was on a visit, into the little market town.

"My word, how hot it is !" panted the married sister, who was fat, fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief and sniffing her smelling salts. "And how that bird *do* sing !"

"Yes," said the farmer's wife, flicking the flies off the jogging pony ; "I can't mind hearing the blackbirds so beautiful since I was a little tiny child."

"Well, now, that's as pretty a little place as you might wish to see !" exclaimed the married sister, flouncing round with a jingle of jet bugles—she was wearing her best mantle of thick black cloth in honour of the drive—and staring up at Miss Rose's cottage. "And who's the old lady sitting by the window ? She do look just like a picture, to be sure."

"That's Miss Rose Garton," said the farmer's wife, also turning



her head to look up to the cottage ; " the old parson's daughter she was ; she's lived there ever since he died, an' that was before I was married. Squire Vernon that I was telling you about last night, always wanted her ; that's why he never married. But they *do* say she lost her heart to young Mr. Harry, the Squire's brother, as left home so sudden ; they say he was a bad lot, but I thought him a fine gentleman, and so handsome and affable. And Miss Rose, too, I mind her when she was a young girl, about my Katey's age, as you might say, an' as lovely as a flower ; an' my ! the way the young gentlemen used to come from all the country round to church of a Sunday to see Miss Rose sitting in the parson's pew. Bless that bird, how he's singing ! You'd think he'd tire himself out."

The pony had climbed to level ground, and the farmer's wife giving him an adroit touch of the whip in the tenderest part of his person, he started off at a jog-trot along the dusty road towards the little market town.

The sound of the wheels died away in the distance, but the blackbird sang on, and Miss Rose still sat gazing through her tear-dimmed eyes at the sun-lighted landscape, dreaming of years long dead. The bird's song ceased, yet still Miss Rose sat musing, while the shadows lengthened across the water-meadows. At last she rose from her place, her knitting falling unheeded to the floor, and crossing the little room with tremulous footsteps, unlocked an inlaid escritoire and drew therefrom a withered flower and a worn morocco miniature case.

She held them in her hands and looked at them till a rush of hot tears blinded her eyes, then she raised them to her lips and kissed them again and again, passionately, hungrily.

" Harry," she murmured, " Harry, my love, my love, will you never come back to me ? I have waited so long, so long." And she bowed her head against the escritoire and wept there with her treasure clasped closely to her breast.

* * * * *

Farmer Burford's spring cart had come to a halt on the dusty road, and the farmer's wife was holding a lengthy conversation with a tall, gaunt old man with a thin, dark face and snow-white hair.

" It is so long since I was here," said the white-haired man, in rich, refined tones that were somehow familiar to the farmer's

wife, "that I thought I might venture to ask you a few questions of people I once knew."

"Yes, sir, with pleasure," said the farmer's wife, and waited, puzzled by a haunting likeness that she could not trace.

"Old Mr. Garton," went on the stranger in a hesitating tone, "I suppose he has been dead a long time; but of course he must be; I forgot how time had flown; why it is nearly forty years since I last saw him, and he was an elderly man then."

"Oh yes, sir," said the farmer's wife, "he's been dead these twenty years and more. Why, we've had two parsons since him."

"Yes, yes," sighed the old man, "I have been abroad so long, without news of the old home—and—and—Squire Vernon and his wife; I hope they are well?"

"Squire Vernon and his wife," repeated the farmer's wife, "why they died ever so long ago, long before Mr. Harry Vernon left home even, and Squire George, their son, who died last winter, he never married at all."

"Dead," muttered the stranger, "George dead, and never married—but—but I—it was said that he was going to marry Miss Garton, the old rector's daughter, I mean." His face was white under its bronze, his tone anxious.

"Well, sir," said the farmer's wife, "'twas always said he wanted her sorely, but she'd always favoured Mr. Harry, and they say she's been waiting for him ever since he went away, though 'tis well known that Mr. Harry had married some low person an' went away because the Squire found it out."

"It's a lie!" thundered the stranger suddenly. "A shameful lie: Harry Vernon never married at all." His face was distorted with passion, his thin hands clenched till the knuckles stood out white and sharp through the wrinkled skin. "And—and—Miss Garton?" he stammered in a broken voice, his face softening, "is she still alive—still waiting?"

"Yes, sir," said the farmer's wife, and her voice was wondrous gentle and kind, "she's still waiting in the little rose-covered cottage above Burford's farm—the same Ann Masters lived in after she left old Mrs. Vernon's service—I saw her as I came along."

"Thank you," said the stranger, and raising his hat with never-failing courtesy, he strode off along the road with a swift, firm tread, remarkable in a man of his years. The farmer's wife looked after him with tears in her eyes.

"Well, I never did!" ejaculated her married sister. "Of all the extraordinary things; whoever is the old gentleman, Maria?"

But Farmer Burford's wife gave her no answer, and only watched the stranger's retreating form till a bend in the road hid it from view; then she drew her hand across her eyes, and jerking the reins on the pony's back, the cart rattled off again towards the town.

* * * * *

The shadows were long in the water-meadows, and the cattle had stirred and were moving in a straggling line across the grass to the river. Jane, the servant, still slumbered on the back door step; the blackbird was still silent in the copse. In the little sitting-room the silence was only broken now and again by a stifled sound—half sigh, half sob—from Miss Rose, as she leaned against the escritoire with the withered flower and the miniature case clasped in her hands. Another bee had come and was humming about the lilies and roses at the window, but she did not hear. The wicket gate rattled and banged as someone opened it and let it fall to behind him; a footstep crunched the gravel outside, but she did not heed it. A shadow darkened the little room as the stranger stepped through the open window.

"Rosy, my little Rosy!" he cried hoarsely.

She turned swiftly.

"Harry, Harry," she sobbed, and was in his arms with his lips pressed to hers. And silence fell on the little room. . . .

"He told me it was himself you loved, Rosy, and begged me never to speak of it to you because you were so full of remorse. And, God forgive me, I believed him."

"He told me you were already married, Harry, but I never believed it of you."

"And you have waited for me all these years, my little Rosy—so long—so long."

"Ah, Harry, what are those years to me, what is my whole life, so that we are together again—at last."

* * * * *

Sweet and passionate from the copse came the blackbird's song, filling the little room with throbbing melody.

And Time and Love stood hand in hand and watched these two white-haired lovers clasped in each other's arms.

A. M. HEWITT.

A Loveless Match.

By FLORENCE MASTERS.

"NURSE, may I come in? I want a chat with you."

"Dear heart alive, how you made me jump! I thought you were gone to the ball, my honey."

"No, I cried off at the last moment; I was in no humour for dancing. I had far rather be here with you, nurse."

"There, to think of it, Miss Tessa! and you so young too, and always so many partners waiting on you, it isn't natural, really it isn't. Now sit 'ee down in this chair and take a footstool, 'twill rest you. An' where have 'ee been to all this while, honey? These eyes haven't seen the like of you for three days and more."

"Three days. Is it so long, nurse?" And the speaker, a young girl of not more than eighteen years, sank with a sigh into the seat offered her, and gazed absently at the pink and blue, green and silver jets and spurts of flame which issued from the great log on the hearth.

Mrs. Meech, the person addressed as nurse, was in reality housekeeper at Sturton Towers, but long ago she had acted in the former capacity to Miss Tessa, as the young girl was called, when, having lost her own baby, she came to play a mother's part to Sir Alwynne Sturton's motherless daughter. It would almost seem that she had transferred her love from the dead child to the living, for her devotion to her mistress was extraordinary; but she was amply repaid both by Sir Alwynne and her nursling, who regarded her with affection and esteem, and when the time came that Miss Tessa passed into the hands of governesses, the girl was still faithful to her earliest friend and never let a day go by without spending a portion of it with the good old soul, to whom she was as the very apple of her eye.

The room in which these two now sat was a spacious chamber, the oak panellings darkened with the touch of time, the window lofty and mullioned; all round were presses and store cupboards; the fireplace was guiltless of grate, and on this particular night in question the wind roared in the vast chimney and rattled the casement noisily from time to time, as though demanding admittance. In spite of the facts that the curtains were close drawn and

that the heat of a large lamp spread a glow around them, the young girl shivered.

"You are cold, my sweet, let me get 'ee a shawl," said Mrs. Meech, who, for all that in giving her orders and lecturing the maids always used most correct English, was sure to lapse into the vernacular when her softer feelings were brought into play.

"No, thank you, this is quite warm," was the reply, as the girl touched lightly the sleeve of the long white woollen gown which half hid, half revealed her slender, shapely figure. She was very fair and rather fragile-looking, with dark blue eyes, and long pale-gold hair, which just now hung in one thick plait reaching far below her waist, and Mrs. Meech might well be pardoned for the looks of undisguised admiration she cast on her from time to time.

"Very well, dearie," she said, as she resumed the sewing she had put on one side for a few moments, whilst the storm without rattled and shrieked up the valley, and a few flakes of snow fell hissing on the burning embers, into which Tessa Sturton was still gazing absently.

"The old year dies hard, nurse," at length she remarked; "one could almost fancy that he was raving and weeping for very jealousy at the mere thought of everybody being on the tip-toe of eager expectancy to welcome his successor."

"Yes, it's a storm and no mistake! It do remind me of the night poor Mr. Bryan come by his end. But, there, why should an old woman like me seek to cloud your sweet face with her doleful recollections? The world is all before you, dear honey. As far as one can see, you may welcome in the new year right gladly. I guess it will be bringing you a sweetheart before it's many months with us."

"Nay, nurse; I love old friends best. I have been very happy in this that is nearly passed—happier than perhaps I shall ever be again."

"Why, what makes you say that, honey? Has something happened that you won't tell your old nurse about?"

"Something has happened, and I want to tell you all about it. Oh! Nursie, I am so miserable! You know Captain Sturton, my cousin?"

"Yes. You mean him as comes into the estates, failing your father's having a son?"

"He has proposed to my father for my hand, and the worst of it is my dear daddy wishes the marriage above all things."

"Well, honey, he might not make a bad husband for you, on the whole. He's handsome and well set-up, and rich. Why, come to think of it, you need never leave the Towers at all, maybe, if you wedded him."

"You too, nurse! Oh! this is dreadful! Papa's argument all over again." And the girl covered her face with her slender white fingers, and a couple of tears oozed from between them. Mrs. Meech got up and twined her arms lovingly round her treasure's neck.

"There's one thing you haven't told me, dearie," she said, in coaxing tones.

"What is that?" queried Tessa, taking her hands from her face and lifting a pair of dewy eyes to the homely features of the housekeeper.

"That you liked some one better," said her interlocutor, letting fly a chance shaft which struck home. Over the face that she loved the best on earth there crept a look half fear, half incredulity; then a tinge of pink gathered and spread under the delicate skin, whilst the eyes, but lately sad, brightened and glowed as though they had caught the reflection of some unseen star.

"How did you know, nurse? Why I thought it was my own secret, and you have found it out."

"It was only guess-work, darling. But why trouble about Captain Sturton, my angel, if you have already given your heart away?"

"Oh, hush! nurse, walls have ears. It is like this, you know: I am afraid my father would never consent; and Aleyn is so poor and proud, too, it would be years before he will be able to claim me. Besides, he has not said—he would not, he is so honourable. And my dear, dear daddy, for whom I would sacrifice most things, will, I know, fret and fume and plead my cousin's cause, and I shall grow unhappy because he is unhappy, and shall give in after all. Do you not think, nurse, that it would be better to settle the matter at once and say 'Yes?'"

"No, honey; I do not, decidedly. I know who's been coaching you up in all this worldly wisdom; it's that heartless, designing old woman, the captain's mother. She wants your own fortune,

added to Sturton Towers, for that precious son of hers ; but oh dear, Miss Tessa, for heaven's sake, do not let her or any one else persuade you into making a loveless match. Mr. Aleyn's a gentleman and a clever one, too, and is bound to make his way in time. Tell Sir Alwynne all about it and ask him to let you wait awhile."

Tessa shook her head sadly, then blushed again. "Aleyn—Mr. Maine has not spoken of love to me," she said ; "you forget that, nurse. Years ago, though, we promised to wait for each other, and I know very well he has not changed."

"Changed ! How could he, my precious, if he once loved such a sweet flower as you ? No, no, he's not o' that sort. I mind how I used to take you down to the rectory for the lessons in Latin his father used to give you. He was a good old man, too ; a pity that he died so poor, and Mr. Aleyn not fairly started in the world. But you bide a bit, miss ; he'll make some big hit, sure enough, and then the briefs or whatever you call'n will come tumbling in."

"Nurse, nurse, I wish I had your hopeful disposition. But I know perfectly well that I shall be weak enough to give way ; daddy will get his wish in the end, I am sure."

"Look here, Miss Tessa, dear, the bare thought of your going deliberately into such an awful abyss makes me fair tremble. It brings to my mind a very sad story, and a perfectly true one. You heard me mention your Uncle Bryan just now, and you have been told that he came to an untimely death just after he had come of age, but I think the facts of the case have been carefully kept from you—indeed to this day your father, Sir Alwynne, never alludes to them as the subject is too painful, for he was passionately attached to his elder brother, and the estates and title were to him but poor compensation for his loss. I was living at Sturton Marshall the time it happened—a mere slip of a girl of fifteen, and in the kitchen at Dr. Hobbs's house on the square. He were an old man with one only daughter, just as Sir Alwynne might be, and she was a bonny creature and no mistake ; not so comely as some I could name, but dark-eyed and merry, with a ripple of laughter or a dazzling smile for all she met. She could sing, too, gloriously, having a beautiful voice, which had been trained abroad, and her name was always a draw at the charity concerts given from time to time in the neighbour-

hood. 'Twas not so very long before it were noised about that Mr. Bryan, your uncle, were madly in love with her, and this report were followed by another that his father had set his face against the match. This was rather unexpected, for Dr. Hobbs was thought a deal of, and his wife a lady born and bred—one of the Newtoqs of Newton Regis in fact—and you may guess that he was none too pleased at the turn things were taking. I remember the last time those two poor creatures were really happy together; it was Christmas Eve, and we were busy in the schoolroom finishing off the wreaths and the texts for the church. I had gone over to help Miss Rhona, cutting and bunching up the holly and yew and feathery fir whilst she bound it into garlands for the pillars. I myself saw Mr. Bryan take her hand and kiss it because she had pricked her pretty plump fingers. Suddenly Bennett, the page, appeared at the door and beckoned me to him.

“‘Tell Miss Rhona cook says the pies is baked and claret mulled—and oh, my! shouldn't I like a taste, for it's bitter cold to-night,’ says he.

“‘I'll tell mistress all you say,’ I replied, and got the door pulled to in my face for my pains, and I could but go back to Miss Rhona and deliver the message, although I did not half like disturbing her, for she was deep in conversation with Mr. Bryan, and I knew they had met but seldom lately. Sir Francis, your grandfather, had threatened to disinherit Mr. Bryan if he continued courting Miss Rhona, that is to say of what went outside the entail, which last really was not enough to maintain the position and keep up the property; whilst Dr. Hobbs was furious, declaring that his daughter should never marry into a family who would not receive her with open arms, and hinting that she was about to be betrothed to another. Poor Miss Rhona, too, was almost as proud as her father, and so high-spirited that every one feared she might, if tried too far, fall in with his wishes. But as I have said, on this night she was happy, having cast her sorrow behind her, and when I gave her cook's message, she said, half laughingly:

“‘There, Bryan, you must come and taste them; you are sure of a hearty welcome to-night if on none other in the year. My father, as you well know, keeps open house on Christmas Eve, laying aside all feuds for the time being, if he have any. The

pies and claret are for the ringers, and I always dispense them ; it is such fun to see them gobble them down,' and a ripple of a laugh closed the sentence, but it died on her lips as she caught Mr. Bryan's reply.

" 'Not to-night, dear love,' I heard him say ; 'remember, I have passed my word to my father. There are only six short months to wait and then——' The rest of the sentence was lost, for by this time we were out in the open with the schoolhouse and the church with its clashing bells behind us, but I understood what Mr. Bryan meant. In six months he would be of age, with an income of his own, small 'tis true, but enough to keep a wife in a quiet way. Well, we made our way across the square, towards Miss Rhona's home, which was all ablaze with light, directly opposite. I did my best not to hear what they said, and lingered a little, but the wind blew odd words to me and I caught enough to know that my high-spirited mistress's blood was up, and when the lovers parted, as they very quickly did, I seemed to realize that something sad and fraught with evil had happened.

"Within two months from that Miss Rhona was married to a Mr. Balstone, a man who had made a very large fortune abroad and had bought 'The Turrets' down at Westmead—the house that is in ruins, you know, honey. The day of the wedding was a soft, fine February specimen, and Miss Rhona would have no carriages, and the procession across the square was a pretty sight, she carrying herself bravely till she got to the altar. Then she broke down completely, and laying her pretty head on the altar rails she sobbed so that every one in the church could hear her. The clergyman stopped and bending down asked her if she were there against her will. This rallied her and she shook her head, choked down her sobs and the service proceeded. But another trial awaited her when she came out, for at the church door stood Mr. Bryan, a mere ghost of his former self, with all the life gone from him, so to speak.

" 'Oh, Rhona, you might have waited,' he said, almost in a whisper, but she heard him. 'Only six short months,' he went on, like one in a dream. The bridegroom scowled, as well he might, then hurried Miss Rhona along, whilst she, deadly white and with an unutterably sad look in her tear-stained eyes, was about the sorriest bride I ever remember. She managed to get inside the door of her home and then she dropped senseless to

the ground. Well, I must hurry on with my tale, for 'tis getting late and you are tired, honey. After the wedding Mr. Bryan left home and Mr. and Mrs. Balstone were travelling abroad till within a fortnight of Mr. Bryan's birthday. All the rejoicings and festivities were postponed indefinitely, much to the disappointment of the folks at Sturton and Sturton Marshall, but Mr. Bryan had been ill, 'twas said, and no one was very surprised to hear it. Things went on pretty quietly for a while and then through the autumn and winter there were great doings at 'The Turrets;' guests by dozens, big shooting parties and dances no end, till all the country-side were envying Mrs. Balstone her riches; but they need not have done, for they never brought her any happiness. Just before Christmas, I was, by her own request, transferred to her establishment, and that is how I came to know all about that dreadful Christmas Eve. Mistress had not been well and doctor had prescribed a week's quiet and rest, and so she was not allowed to go to the big dinner party at her father's that night, though of course Mr. Balstone did. I was tired and got to bed early, and soon dropped asleep, in spite of the fact that the wind was howling and shrieking round the house same as it might be now. Suddenly I awoke at the sound of a woman's voice; a terrified cry of agony—a pistol shot, followed by another—I heard above the roaring of the storm. Then all was still.

"I dared not move, but lay trembling in my bed till one of my fellow-servants came and told me the truth. They had found poor Miss Rhona lying dead in the carriage drive, shot through the heart, whilst Mr. Bryan, though breath was just in him, would not live to see the sun rise, they said; and it was so, he died in the library, whither they had carried him, with the hand of my dead mistress locked fast in his own.

"The master had done the deed, all the servants said; mistress had been watching for him, a strange feeling of fear weighing her down, without knowing why. Then she had heard angry voices, rushed out and thrown herself between her lover and her husband, and received the bullet meant for Mr. Bryan.

"One of the servants, who was hurrying up to the spot, heard Mr. Balstone say, 'I vowed I would shoot you like a dog if ever I found you here,' and with that came the second shot; but by the time a lantern was got the murderer had disappeared.

"Before Mr. Bryan died he solemnly declared that Miss Rhona was quite unaware of his presence near the house, that he had merely come to keep a silent tryst with her for the last time on earth, that he intended leaving England never to return. Then Mr. Balstone, who it seemed was of an intensely jealous disposition, fell across him and recognized him, and the encounter brought about the tragedy that carried off two young creatures in the flower of their youth."

"Poor Uncle Bryan!" said Tessa, "how very sad for him! Was his murderer never punished, nurse?"

"He was never heard of again, honey. Many think he fell into an old marl pit that lies at the outer edge of one of his own coppices, but 'twas too deep to drag, and so his death's unproven to this day, and, strange to say, no one laid claim to his estate, the house has gone to ruins, and the money lies in Chancery," replied Mrs. Meech, who by this time was down on her knees before the fire trying to kindle a blaze, for in the excitement of story-telling she had let it burn itself nearly out.

"Meech, Meech! have you nothing better to do than to rake up sad tales and family secrets when my daughter comes to pass an hour with you?"

These words, uttered in a deep bass voice, caused Mrs. Meech for the second time that night to "nearly jump out of her skin," as she put it afterwards, but she recovered her manners so far as to rise and courtesy low to a tall man with iron-grey hair and imposing presence, who stood just within the doorway, with a look, half-anger, half-sadness, resting on his aristocratic features.

"Daddy!" exclaimed Tessa, rising from her chair, whilst her nurse muttered something about "Sir Alwynne, sir," but could get no further. The baronet kissed his daughter affectionately, and found her cheeks wet.

"What excuse can you offer for making Miss Tessa cry like this?" he asked somewhat sternly.

"None whatever, Sir Alwynne, sir, begging your pardon, only we had been discussing loveless marriages, and it brought the old tale to my mind. I am sorry, sir, if you are annoyed; I did not really mean any harm," and the good old soul looked so genuinely troubled that her master relented somewhat, especially when Tessa put in a word for her nurse.

"It was my fault, daddy-dear; I ought not to have listened,

you know," and she smiled as she said it, and Sir Alwynne's face brightened under the influence of that smile.

But it was grave again ten minutes later, when she went into the library to bid him good-night.

"Tessa, child, I have been thinking that after all this marriage with your cousin may be distasteful to you. Did you suppose your father would force you into it against your will?"

"No, daddy, not that. I feared persuasion."

"Does my dear girl love elsewhere, then?"

A nod of the head and a profusion of blushes told its own tale.

"I will not ask who to-night. Truth will out, I suppose."

And it did, perhaps through Mrs. Meech, who shall say? Anyhow, a week later Aleyn Maine received an invitation to stay at the Towers, and so kindly was he received by the baronet that before the visit was over he found courage to declare his love for Tessa, and was accepted by Sir Alwynne as his daughter's suitor, though that might never have come about had not his dead brother's face so persistently haunted him ever since the night Mrs. Meech had recalled the old sad story. But if it cost him an effort to forego his cherished plans, he was amply repaid in the radiant happiness of his dearly-loved child; and one lovely June morning they plighted their troth in the old church where Aleyn's father had used to minister.

Sir Alwynne is still living, but his nephew died many years ago, and so Tessa never left her old home and their boy is his grandfather's heir; but the old baronet laughingly tells him that he will need patience, for he intends to live to be a hundred, which Tessa declares she hopes he will do, and her husband echoes the wish, for he and his father-in-law are staunch friends. He says that he owes Sir Alwynne a debt of gratitude which he can never repay, for did he not give to his care and keeping the greatest treasure he possessed?

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FEBRUARY, 1897.

"Forbidden."

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of "PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST," "NO COMPROMISE,"
"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ANY FAITH IN HEREDITY?

EDWARD CHARLES KENNARD was appointed to the See of St. Christopher's in the Spring of the year 189- and he probably owed his elevation to the fact that his work on the "New Criticism" had caused a great sensation. "The Rock," "The Record," "The Guardian," and "The Church Times," all joined in a chorus of approval, whilst the Agnostics, Freethinkers, and Elsmerites, etc., etc., scoffed and jeered at it to such an extent that the book was wafted on a wave of popularity through edition after edition, and its Author on to a comfortable seat on the Episcopal Bench. His only sister, Miss Judith Kennard, remained for days in a state of ecstasy. She had looked upon her brother as the best of men, but now she considered him as something more bordering on the divine. She thought that she must give up calling him "Ned" for the future. There was a touch of the schoolboy in the flighty monosyllable, and Edward would certainly sound more respectful. She sighed a sigh of vain regret as she remembered that he had narrowly missed being named Clement after a deceased uncle. Clement! An ideal name for a Bishop, even if he never meant to come into prominence as a martyr. It was an immense pity, but Edward had done very well for Edward the Confessor, so she hoped that a Bishop of St. Christopher's could put up with it; and "Ned" must be banished for ever from the tip of her tongue, and never thought of even in her dreams.

There was one person who naturally would have had a great deal to say on the subject—Beatrice, the Bishop's only daughter; but at present she was fully occupied with the tremendous fact of her own approaching marriage, and she could only take short views of life in every other direction. When the news reached her she flung her arms in a burst of enthusiasm round her father's neck, and told him with her usual impartiality, that he would make "the most beautiful Bishop in the world," but before she could enter into the smallest discussion of its more serious side, she was called away to a modiste in the drawing-room, whilst a milliner was waiting with impatience for her in her own private den. Beatrice was not addicted to the worship of "chiffons," but she knew that a bride must be clothed, and that the clothes must be pretty, so that her husband need not be ashamed to go out with her. At the first ordering, the trousseau seemed the most delightful field for occupation; but the pleasure had palled, as most pleasures do when carried to excess, and now she hated the sound of her dressmaker's smooth voice, and loathed the sight of her milliner. Even presents lost their charm after the first, and as every knick-knack arrived, it was greeted with a sigh as she thought of the polite note of thanks which would be expected in return. Every one knows that this is the inevitable fate of a present before it has developed from the common run of parcels into a diamond necklace, or a massive silver tea-pot, but when the note has been written, the debt of gratitude discharged, then its time for real appreciation comes.

It happened that one day when the wedding was thrillingly near, Mr. James Pemberton, the old chum of the newly made Bishop, came to pay a congratulatory call at No. 17 Eaton Place. He was a clean-shaven man with a clever forehead, and a long nose. His chin also had the power of elongating itself, when its owner was displeased, and acted as a danger-signal to his many friends. For he was a man of many friends, in spite of an occasional dryness of manner, which checked spontaneous bursts of confidence, and belied the natural warmth of his heart. But those who knew him well knew his worth, and those who had gone down into the depths had often found his kindly hand stretched out to help them back. Now he was full of the kindest thoughts towards the father whom he had known ever since they were undergraduates together at Christchurch; and the daughter in whom he had taken a special

interest from the moment that she emerged out of the indefiniteness of long clothes into the more satisfactory certainty of short petticoats; but just because his intentions were so kind his observations were particularly disagreeable.

The Bishop had just been telling him of his plans, which were gradually shaping themselves in his busy mind. He meant to remain where he was till after his daughter's marriage; but meanwhile he had already fixed on a house in Talavera Crescent, where he intended to take up his abode, at least for a time.

"A disgusting hole!" remarked Pemberton, with a grimace as he thought of his own pleasant surroundings in Palace Gardens.

"Yes—outrageous from an æsthetic point of view," the Bishop said with an amused smile as he thought of the long straight streets without one redeeming point in the way of architecture, and with a dirty slovenly population neither picturesque in its ways nor polite in its habits. "But it's about the worst part of my diocese, and I feel that I ought to be there."

"Strange idea of economy to pay rent for a house in the slums, and leave a Palace untenanted in St. Christopher's," with a flavour of sarcasm in his tone, although he thoroughly appreciated the Bishop's motives.

"Economy is a very good thing in its way but there are times when it has to be put on the shelf. I can run down to St. Christopher's when I want to entertain the clergy, for I know I shall be expected to feed the bodies as well as the minds of my flock, and you will have to come and help me," with a kindly glance.

"You will have to get Lady Falconer to do the honours."

"Yes, when her husband can spare her, but I'm perfectly conscious that I shall lose my little girl without getting an equivalent in the shape of a son," the father said very gravely as he took up a paper-knife and began to cut the leaves of a Magazine.

James Pemberton had not the smallest doubt of it either, and he did not feel called upon to invent a soothing falsehood. He often told an unpleasant truth, and trod on people's tenderest feelings when there was no necessity for the effort; but he never was tempted to err in the other direction.

"Do you believe in heredity?" he blurted out after a pause, simply because it was the last subject he ought to have started under present circumstances.

"I suppose every one does to a certain extent, but I am not an Ibsenite, if you mean that. A physical taint will of course descend from father to son, but I refuse to believe that a drunkard's son must be a sot, or that the son of an immoral man must run away with his neighbour's wife."

"Lucky for you, if you don't," rejoined Pemberton drawing in his lips. "Falconer's father was about as good an example as you could find of every vice under the sun."

"I know it," the Bishop said quietly, but with a look of pain in his frank eyes. "But Falconer was very little with him, and there is nothing against the son. I have made most careful inquiries and I know there isn't," he insisted, as Pemberton raised his eye-brows uncomfortably.

"He has been out of England a good deal hasn't he?—out of sight, and out of hearing," he added in an undertone.

"He has travelled certainly, and I consider it a very good thing for a young fellow with plenty of cash, and an endless amount of leisure. Come into the next room, and see the presents," he suggested as if to change the subject. "Yours occupies a conspicuous place, and Bee says she likes it better than anything else."

Pemberton's face lost its judicial expression and assumed that of a benevolent friend, as he followed the Bishop into the drawing-room.

CHAPTER II.

"ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS."

OH the clatter of tongues! James Pemberton felt almost irresistibly impelled to put his hands to his ears, but fortunately some inward grace of courtesy stopped him in time, and he tried to look as conventionally amiable as possible. The drawing-room in No. 17 looked like the agglomerated sections of the principal shops in Regent Street or Bond Street, with some of the crowd from Rotten Row turned in to look at them.

"Such diamonds!" exclaimed that flighty Queen of fashion, Lady Crosby. "If she begins with a tiara like that, how will she end? That is what I want to know."

"But why, Lady Crosby?—the beginning is everything—the end nobody need find out," remarked Major Mortimer in his carefully arranged drawl.

"Everything is found out in these open-air days that we live in. If I picked your pocket this moment, my husband would hear of it in New York before he went to bed."

"Would he?" slowly, "then I wonder that he stayed two hours in America."

"Why? I never picked yours or any one else's," looking up at him, her blue eyes full of surprise.

"No—no more you have," he said as an after thought.

Lady Crosby blushed slightly as she turned away with a laugh. Many were the scrapes she got into through sheer audacity and thoughtlessness; but she contrived to keep them very carefully from Sir Digby's ears, and she did not want to be reminded of them in cold blood. Feeling rather cross, she threw a spiteful glance at a startling apparition in red and green, with a large white hat and a plume of yellow feathers, turning upwards from a fair face with an elaborated complexion, and a fringe of hair as red as a sunset.

"For pity's sake tell me, who is that creature dressed in a flag?" turning round again.

"Wife of a fellow who paints," replied the Major promptly, for he was a walking London Directory.

"A little vague? Have I seen his pictures?"

"Yes—Niobe—you know."

"Oh—Niobe?"—doubtfully. "She was that very doleful person, wasn't she, who did nothing but cry? I wish this woman had lost all her belongings" viciously.

"Why? She has done you no harm."

"Then she would wear mourning, and not make my eyes ache."

"There is something sublime in your selfishness."

"Selfish? I don't see it," in a matter of fact tone. "It would be better for all the rest of us here—the greatest good of the greatest number—that is what we ought to strive after I believe."

"And you arrive at it by studying Number One. You are very clever," he added with a curious smile.

In the midst of the laughter and chatter stood Beatrice Kennard in the crowd, but not of it, for the moment. She seemed to be separated from the frivolous set around her by the gravity of her thoughts, and yet there was not the slightest shade of unhappiness in her large dark eyes, or her distinctly curved mouth. She was on the brink of a great event, standing before a closed door which had to

be opened in two days. When it was open, what would she find on the other side? Would life be ever the same again? There had been but little time to think during the last few breathless weeks, but she could not refrain from asking herself these questions every now and then. She leant against the window frame—a slight, but well rounded figure, with a natural grace of its own, and asked these questions of the future. But before she could find an answer Mr. Pemberton came up to her, and said something in his quaint way which brought the laughter back to her eyes; and presently, just as he was chatting pleasantly, the door opened, and a tall man made his way into the room, and across it, straight to where Beatrice was standing, when her whole face lighted up, and woke into vivid animation. A swift interchange of glances, a surreptitious squeeze of a small hand, and then Lord Falconer turned round to give the occupants of the room the benefit of his attention, and if he gave his own, he certainly received a fair share of other people's. Beatrice had rather a haughty way of carrying her little head, which gave her an air of distinction, but Lord Falconer looked as if mankind in general were a carpet for his august foot to tread on. He had a rough, fierce beauty of his own, which singled him out of the common ruck, and was just the style to captivate a girl's fancy at the second glance, if she were not too much alarmed by the first. His imperious will was evidenced by the look in his eyes, as well as by the massive strength of his chin. It would have been altogether a fine face, but for the unrefined mouth hidden under a heavy black moustache. If that moustache had been cut off, Beatrice Kennard would have looked at him once with a shudder, and never again: but he would have consoled himself very soon and very easily, for he was not the sort of man to long for anything which he had much trouble to obtain.

"Your friends have come," Beatrice said in a low voice.

"Yes, so I see," in an indifferent tone; and then eagerly, "Oh, by the bye—those rooms are all right at the Grand, but we are only just in time. You are sure you like Paris?"

"Yes, it will be enchanting," brightly.

"Better than some dull hole where we should have nothing to depend on but ourselves."

"Ye—es," more slowly. "The first time you yawned I should have thought you were bored."

"And there, if we yawn, we can go off to the theatre," with a cheerful laugh, in which she did not join very heartily.

Her face had gone back to its former gravity and her dark eyes had almost a scared look, as she said, "But, Falconer, if I make you yawn at the very beginning, what shall we do long before the end?"

"Oh, that'll be all right," complacently. "We shall get along famously, only we mustn't expect too much of human-nature, you know."

"How d'y'e do, Miss Kennard?" The voice was as pleasant as the frank face to which it belonged, but Beatrice gave a start as she heard it.

"*Hugh!*" she exclaimed in a tone of amazement, as a flush of pleasure rose to her cheeks, and she held out her hand delightedly. "I thought you weren't coming back for ten years!"

"So did I, but a stroke of luck came to me and I exchanged with another fellow. Tell you all about it some day;" and then he stopped abruptly, for he reflected that his old friend Bee was about to develope into Lady Falconer, and she might not be as accessible as she used to be in the old days.

"Let me introduce you to Lord Falconer," Beatrice said with an exultant look in her eyes. "Captain Pemberton is one of my oldest friends," she added explanatorily to her lover.

The two men shook hands, looked in each other's faces, and hated each other on the spot.

"One of my oldest friends" is rarely a recommendation to a lover, especially when the friend in question happens to be a well-built, good-looking young fellow, possessed of all the attributes that girls are most likely to favour. But there was no jealousy in Falconer's hard unwavering glance, as he took Captain Pemberton's measure. In two days Beatrice was to be his very own, and he knew his own power to keep what once was his; but he was afraid from the first glance that the fellow might become a bore if he gave him any encouragement, so he turned away without the smallest ceremony, merely saying that he must go and speak to that "little Sartoris woman." He had asked permission for a few of his artist friends to come and look at the presents, and Beatrice gave him some cards to fill up with what names he chose. He had only used one, and the girl in the white hat was the product. She had made herself quite at home, chatting cheerfully with Miss Judith, who eyed her as if she were

some mysterious animal whose pranks might be rather disturbing, but who could not help laughing at some of her remarks which were more spicy than those she was accustomed to. Presently Mrs. Sartoris jumped up, for she had caught sight of a man that she knew, and he was a prize not to be lost by a unit amongst a crowd of strangers. They went round the room together making cheap comments on expensive trifles, but she dallied longest at a small round table, spread with many varieties of diamond ornaments. They seemed to have a special attraction for her, as they sparkled and flashed from their blue velvet settings. She had seen nothing like them except in shop windows, and her small soul was filled with envy. Many of them were the bridegroom's gift, and when he joined her, she held up a diamond star in its morocco-case, and looked up into his face with a pout. "Mine that poor Bruin gave me will look nothing after this."

"Make him give you another, then," he rejoined carelessly. "Niobe must have brought in something."

"If it has, he won't spend it on poor me." Then her eyes fell on the tiara which had excited Lady Crosby's admiration. "Miss Ken-nard is a fortunate girl; I wonder if she appreciates her luck," she said with a sigh of envy.

"She doesn't care for those things as much as you do," he said, glancing at the diamonds.

"Does she care for you?" she asked quickly, looking up into his dark face with a curious look in her eyes.

"Don't talk of her," he said shortly, as he looked across the room where Beatrice was standing, her delicate profile outlined against the moss-green curtain. She seemed for the moment as if she were as far removed from the woman by his side, as if she were at the North Pole. A wide chasm separated them, and yet he had the audacity to reach across and claim her. Sometimes he had the grace to wonder at his own boldness.

"Why not? She is only flesh and blood like the rest of us," Mrs. Sartoris said with an angry laugh. "And I am glad to see that she can amuse herself like the rest of us when you are not on guard by her side." She made the remark because Captain Pemberton was taking every opportunity he could of talking to the old friend whom he was persuaded that he would not see much of in the future. Beatrice's attention was always being claimed by somebody else, but she on her side had a thousand questions to ask him, and she was not willing to

let him slip away. During an interval he asked her what he should give her by way of a remembrance.

She reflected a moment, and then said eagerly, "A racket; mine is done for, and it will remind me of those dear delightful days in the Square."

"You shall have it," he said, highly gratified at her remembrance of the past. He was delighted to find that she did not want to forget it in the face of her brilliant future, and as he looked down into the dark eyes which he had known for most of his life, he wondered how it would have been if he had never gone to India, or had come back three months earlier.

"Let her alone," Lord Falconer said roughly.

"Oh, ta-ta," Mrs. Sartoris answered, with a shrug of her shoulders which brought her exaggerated frills above her ears. "I don't know you in your new character, and I can't say I find you pleasant. Pray don't come to Bloomfield Road until you've gone back to your old one."

She looked over her shoulder, just as she was making her way to the door. "Oh, hy-the-bye, tell Miss Kennard I won't interrupt her; but I've enjoyed seeing her presents immensely, and they are too utterly lovely."

"Little vixen!" muttered Falconer, looking after her with a twinkle in his eyes, but not troubling himself to escort her to the door. "I wonder what made her in such an infernal wax."

The room was thinning fast, for most of the people had about half a dozen engagements to make time for before the dawn. James Pemberton walked off arm in arm with his nephew, anxious to hear about this property which had been left him, and to learn if he were going to sell out or not. Aunt Judith leant back in her chair, the society smile no longer on her thin refined face, as she realized the unpleasant fact that before many hours had come and gone, she would be robbed of the girl who had been like the most loving daughter to herself, and the light of her father's house. And there, just at the other end of the room, was the robber. A man whom she feared rather than liked, and that deluded girl was looking up at him as if he were a god. Presently he stooped and kissed her fresh young lips, and Bee actually seemed to like it. They had forgotten the old lady sitting in the corner, or else they thought that Aunt Judy was as good as nobody, which she might take as a high com-

pliment, for it is far better for the old and the middle-aged than the chance of being taken for a chaperoning nuisance.

CHAPTER III.

A BRIDE WITHOUT A PAST.

BEATRICE KENNARD was sitting close to her aunt on a low chair, putting the last stitches into a fleecy white shawl which was intended for Miss Judith's thin shoulders when summer chilled into autumn. It had been a long time about, taken up at odd moments, and laid down for many weeks; but to-day it was to be finished, like the days of her girlhood. At this hour to-morrow she would be a married woman; and this was their last day together. They had been very good comrades these two, the elder had made full allowance for youth and high spirits, the younger had always come to the elder for the sympathy which her father was often too busy to give her. And Miss Judith's sympathy was boundless; neither the sad nor the silly could exhaust it. She was no animated piece of putty, however, ready to respond to every impression. Anything savouring of meanness found her hard as adamant; but her niece had never tried her in that way. She was a generous-minded impulsive girl, who generally got into scrapes through her ready confidence in others; and when she sinned she paid for all the small sins of a thoughtless girlhood, with a swift repentance, which always brought prompt absolution from her aunt. Nobody except dear old Aunt Judy guessed how sensitive she was, for she hid her wounded feelings under a cloak of silent reserve and made no outward fuss about them. Her father was devoted to his work as a parish-priest, and had plenty of love, but very little time to give to his daughter; so that Beatrice would probably have been thrown back upon herself, her girlish spontaneity checked in infancy would never have been likely to recover itself if Miss Judith Kennard had not taken up her abode in her brother's house soon after the death of her sister-in-law. She took the motherless child at once into the warmest corner of her heart, and there she had kept her ever since. When the child grew into an unusually pretty girl, it was a delight to her to see the admiring glances that followed her as they drove about the streets or walked in the Row. She chaperoned her to one dance after another,

and made herself agreeable to all the men that came about the house, but she watched each in turn with the suspicious eye of a sentinel, lest he should be the one to steal her treasure. She fancied that she was very sharp about that sort of thing; but as the man who carries the death-dealing bomb is generally allowed to pass on scot-free, whilst the innocent passer-by with a bandbox is arrested, she kept her knowing eye on a fair-haired curate who seemed to her the nicest specimen in the whole collection, gave a casual glance to a lively young Treasury-clerk who always made Beatrice laugh with his fine attempts at wit, and never gave a thought to the black-haired giant who dropped in now and then, but often sat in his chair without a word.

When Beatrice came to tell her that Lord Falconer had proposed to her and she had accepted him, and that, moreover, she was the happiest girl in the world, the poor old lady felt as if she had received a thundering blow on the top of her head. She took off her spectacles and wiped them with fingers that shook, but "never a word said she." "Auntie, don't you congratulate me?" cried the girl, anxious for the sympathy that never failed her in her new and wonderful joy.

"You are joking with me—you are taking me in—go away with you," she said feebly with an attempt at playfulness.

But it was no use; the girl's radiant face told its own tale in language that must be true; and as she kissed her, and blessed her, her heart was sinking lower and lower. If it had only been any other man than that!

It was greatly to her credit that she never said one word against him during all the weeks that followed; but with the inconsistency of a true woman she took an absolute dislike to the Willoughbys, who had invited them to a dinner at Richmond where they had first met Lord Falconer. She was convinced that if it had not been for that dinner at the Star and Garter, followed by that saunter in the star-lit gardens where nobody could chaperone anybody, and where the glowing tips of countless cigars seemed to match in number the bright stars above, this misfortune would never have come about. Nothing would induce her to go to Richmond again. She had always some excuse ready, the drive was too long, or she thought there was going to be a thunderstorm; and as she was generally ready to do anything that was asked of her, Beatrice never canvassed these objections. But

the mischief was done. Poor Aunt Judy bore up very well and tried to look as if she were glad to see him whenever he came in, but Lord Falconer was perfectly aware of her dislike. It amused him rather than not, and he made up for it on his own side by disliking his future father-in-law. The Rev. Edward Kennard was only a parish priest, Rector of a West End parish, when he told him that he wanted to marry his daughter. It was nothing to him that Mr. Kennard was an eloquent preacher, a clever writer, a man of great repute amongst the theologians of the day. He had no interest in theology, which he considered the province of all clerics because they were bound to understand it, and of most women because they were sure to know nothing about it. And women he fancied always enjoyed what they did not understand, whilst men enjoyed nothing that did not appeal to their reason. Anyhow he considered that a parson ought to jump at his offer, and he was annoyed with the Rector for not doing so. Mr. Kennard gave his consent most reluctantly, but he could find no actual, substantial reason for withholding it; and Lord Falconer owed him a grudge for his reluctance though he showed no outward sign of it. Still he was so much in love with Beatrice that he gave in readily to all the Rector's conditions, knowing that he should do what he chose when he had won her for his wife. To get her was the great thing; the conditions were mere cobwebs which he could break through whenever he liked.

Beatrice and Miss Judith did not talk much. It seemed as if they had so very much to say that they did not know where to begin. Everything was finished; no more trying on of hats or frocks, no more untying of parcels, because all the presents had come except Captain Pemberton's. As they were sitting there it was brought in, and Beatrice received it with a smile of pleasure. It was an unexceptional racket by the best maker, and on the handle was a silver band with a bee under a coronet engraved upon it. "I am so glad that he has put a bee instead of a prosaic F," she said as she studied it closely.

"Are you? I am almost sorry that it is not an F," the old lady said gently. "It would be fitter for a staid married woman."

"But I shan't be old, Auntie; I shall still be a girl in spite of a husband, a coronet, and a carriage of my own." The tears were in her large eyes, but she kept them back, and talked on as if afraid any longer of silence. "*Your* girl, you know; you shan't give me up.

I shall want you just as much as ever, and you couldn't get a new cap without me, you know you couldn't."

"I shall learn to be very independent," drawing herself up in fun, though her poor old lips were trembling. "I shall have Edward all to myself, with no one to interfere, and—and I shall be very glad to be alone sometimes."

"Auntie, you are the wretchedest humbug I ever knew," Beatrice exclaimed as she threw down her racket, and taking one of Miss Judith's hands in hers stroked it lovingly. "There is never any use in attempting it, so you had better give it up. If you don't miss me it will be because you see too much of me. Falconer will be out a good deal—men always are—and then I shall come and take you for a drive in my own Victoria." And so she went on building one castle in the air after another, in the vain attempt to induce her Aunt to look upon her marriage as a great and enduring good, instead of an unmitigated evil. She had won her back to cheerfulness with infinite pains by the time their visitors arrived. These consisted of her uncle and aunt, Colonel and Mrs. Wentworth, and their ward Flora Vivian, the orphaned daughter of an old brother-officer.

The Colonel was short, stout and fussy, with a great idea of his own importance in which few other people shared. His wife was a bland woman who was chiefly remarkable for wearing handsome mantles. Her husband looked upon her as an important piece of furniture, without which his rooms would seem rather empty, for she had no more personality than an arm-chair, and she was as lymphatic as a cow. In direct contrast to both of them, Flo was brimming over with life and intelligence. Her auburn hair, which is not meant to be a euphuistic way of expressing "carrots," was the most appropriate frame for a piquant face, with sparkling eyes and cherubic mouth. The two girls were great allies, and the newly-arrived Flo dragged Bee at once into a corner, eager to get answers to all the questions she was dying to ask.

"Come and look at the presents."

"Oh I can see them afterwards," with a careless glance at a table which was crowded with salt-cellars and tea-pots. "But tell me about *him*. Is he too awfully nice?" Beatrice laughed, and said Flo would see him later on, for he was coming to dinner to be trotted out before her scanty number of belongings.

And then, quick as a fire-fly, an insect that she rather resembled,

Flo darted off to another subject, and exclaimed "Isn't it delightful Uncle Ned being made Bishop of St. Christopher's? The palace, you know, is only a mile from us, so that when you are down there we can meet fifty times a day."

"And when I am not down there, you will be flirting with all the ordination candidates, and distracting them from their studies," Beatrice suggested out of her knowledge of human nature.

"Not I—mere boys—nothing but an Archdeacon would suit me—I would rather like an Archdeacon," she said meditatively.

"Why?" with a restless glance towards the door, for this was just about the hour at which Bæe expected her lover. "He would probably be old enough to be your father."

"Yes, but then I could ask him what he really was, and no one can ever tell me. There's something as indefinite about an Archdeacon as a dodo, but at least he's not extinct. Bee, is Lord Falconer good at answering questions?" with solemnity as if the answer were of great importance.

"I shouldn't say that he was," with a little laugh as her mind flew back to his usual style of conversation.

"Then I am very glad that I am not going to marry him," said the grave philosopher of seventeen.

"So am I," Beatrice answered with her head out of the window as a hansom drew up at the door, and the pride of anticipatory possession in her heart, "but I don't regard a husband as a dictionary."

Then Lord Falconer came in and at once became the centre of attraction. He always looked too large for any room that was not of absolutely palatial proportions. Following his own inclinations, according to his invariable rule, he came up to the window where the two girls were standing, answered the look in Beatrice's eyes with one quite as tender in his own, as he pressed her hand, and said "How d'ye do?" to Flora without waiting to be introduced.

"You and Beatrice are great chums I know," he said cordially as he mentally summed her up as a jolly little girl with plenty of go, "and I hope you will take me into partnership. Won't do to leave me out in the cold."

"No, indeed, Lord Falconer," blushing with unusual shyness under the steady gaze of a man who always prolonged a glance which seemed oppressive to the recipient.

CHAPTER IV.

MARRIED.

THE wedding was over, and Beatrice Kennard had developed into the Countess of Falconer, wife of a peer of the realm. James Pemberton looked on with an amused but cynical eye as he stood in the Kennards' drawing-room. He had never seen two such sets of antagonistic opposites collected under the same roof in the whole course of his varied experience. The Bishop had always mixed in what goes by the name of "good society." His friends were generally well-born and equally well-bred, pleasant, cultivated people who pursued their various careers with enough dignity, and with no conscious dulness; whilst the bridegroom belonged by predilection to what is called the "smart set" by the society-papers. Their great object was to be up to date in everything, dress, conversation, manners, and even religion. The women went to church in frocks of the newest cut, with gardens in their hats, and hugest of puffs on their sleeves, and listened to some fashionable preacher, in order to cut him up with trenchant wit half-an-hour later at the Church Parade in the Park. The men affected always to be in the highest spirits, apt to grow rowdy when wanting to be really cheerful, and quoted coster songs when they wished to be extra facetious. They got on very well with girls of their own set, and embarked as easily in flirtation as a spider on his thread. They lived, they eat, and if to-morrow they had to die that was double reason why they should enjoy themselves to-day. To-day was everything to them, as it is to the butterfly, and they made the most of it in their own light-hearted fashion. They had no reverence for anything on earth except their own words of honour, and could crack a risky joke under the Bishop's nose without the slightest blush to do proxy for an apology. A happy-go-lucky set, with laughter in their eyes, and light words on their lips, and many a real tragedy in their lives covered up from the word by a mask of comedy.

Flora Vivian stood on the outskirts of the steady set. Val Forrester hung on to the rear-guard of the other division. The girl was too full of fun—real girlish fun—to feel quite in correspondence with her own more sober environment, whilst the boy was as yet too fresh and too unspoilt to be quite at his ease with his

more experienced associates. They came together by the force of circumstances, and fraternised over a scrap of wedding-cake, and a glass of claret, which Forrester had procured for her at the expense of much muscular strength. An inexperienced looker-on who had never been at a London ball, and seen the rush for the supper-room, as soon as its doors were open, would have wondered why all these people who had evidently spent so much money on dress-makers and tailors, had nothing to expend on their food. For he would have thought that they were all very near starvation when he saw how they fought their way to the refreshment-table, over the patent leathered toe of the male, or the delicate chiffon frill of the fairer sex. There was plenty to eat or drink for there was nothing niggardly in Miss Judith's arrangements, but the difficulty was to get at it. The crush was tremendous, the heat suffocating, and Val Forrester fairly mopped his pink and white face, when he had captured that small amount of food, and brought it to the quiet corner in which Flo was waiting for him.

Hugh Pemberton, who had known her all her life, burst out laughing at the expression of her face, when she saw that little bit of almond and plum cake stranded in the centre of a dinner-plate with a wide margin of emptiness all round.

"Thanks ever so much," she murmured, trying to forget her unromantic appetite, which was asserting itself now that it was inconvenient, after deserting her entirely at the hurried luncheon which had been provided earlier in the day. "Feelings" had been too much for her then, but now she could have eaten anything!

"Lavish gratitude for small mercies," remarked Hugh. "A currant and a bit of sugar to keep off starvation."

"Lazy beggar—go and do better yourself," exclaimed Forrester wrathfully. "It's easy to look on and grumble. I nearly lost my coat as it was—and I thought my eye-lashes would go next; and not a soul in that crowd will ever speak to me again," he added ruefully, "for I've trodden ruthlessly on every woman's gown, and"—

"No wonder, you took so long; Miss Vivian is ready for more"—mischievously.

Forrester gave a despairing sigh, and then his face brightened. "Couldn't I run down to the kitchen? I shouldn't mind facing twenty cooks. They wouldn't be half so rough!"

"I know a better plan," Flora said, her wits sharpened by her

hunger. "There was a very good luncheon in the library, and nobody ate anything. Let us go and see if it is cleared away."

The motion was carried *nem. con.* and the three stole stealthily across the hall into the now deserted library. Beatrice looking round a moment later, wondered what had become of them.

She was in the middle of the eager chattering crowd close by her husband's side, and as everybody allowed, they were a striking pair—with more than an ordinary share of beauty between them.

"Made for each other," exclaimed an old dowager, whose stock phrase it was at every wedding. James Pemberton's lip curled disdainfully. "Yes, made for him as a porcelain vase for a pork-shop millionaire. He can pay for it—and he can break it when he chooses," he soliloquised.

"My dear Bishop, I just want two words with you," and Mrs. Wentworth's cousin, Mrs. Godfrey Vivian, who considered herself a connection, and desired to advertise the claim, now that the Kennards were really becoming people whom it was an advantage to know—laid a plump, much beringed hand on his coat-sleeve. "Have you seen the review of your delightful book in the 'Religious Expositor'?"

"No. What do they say? Give it me pretty hot, I expect," his face kindling with interest.

"Oh it's too shameful—cuts it up in a most scandalous fashion. I never read anything half so spiteful," with uplifted hands.

"Excellent, my dear Mrs. Vivian," the Bishop said, with his ready smile, "to be abused by the 'Religious Expositor' is the highest compliment they can pay me."

"But they say that it is written by a fool," looking bewildered. "Fancy calling a Bishop a fool! I am sure it borders on sacrilege. I should indict them for libel."

"Run up their circulation—and empty my pockets. No, thank you; we are all fools to those who don't understand us, and some of us are fools to those who know us best. That is the saddest thing." His face was very grave and she feared lest she might have offended him; but when she began to apologise, he stopped her at once. "The Expositor neither knows nor understands me, so it is all right, and I'm much obliged to you. Let me get you an ice."

The bride meanwhile had slipped away from her laughing throng

of bridesmaids, and was divesting herself of her finery in the quiet of her own room.

There was a newly engaged maid somewhere about, but she was not allowed to begin her duties just yet. Only Aunt Judy, who sat on an ottoman in new grey silk dress and white lace shawl, watching with loving eyes, and Flo who had detached herself from her surreptitious luncheon directly she heard the rustle of the bride's dress on the stairs, and the upper housemaid who for many years had waited on her young mistress, were admitted within that door.

Beatrice's lips were tremulous, and a soft pink came and went in her usually white cheeks, but she was keeping up bravely for the sake of the old lady, whose tears she knew to be very near the surface. All the day she seemed to have been acting like an automaton with no conscious cerebration, except when she and Flo had run out in their waterproofs to an early Celebration, at what, only a short time before, had been her father's church, just round the corner. The Bishop celebrated, and many members of the congregation noticed that his voice was very unlike his own as he conducted the service. The lightning flashed in weird gleams of colour through the painted windows, the thunder rolled like the threatening roar of an enemy's guns, and the rain came down in torrents as if to wash away all stains. With all his heart he prayed for a blessing on that young life, starting on its new road that day. There in that quiet church, which seemed all the more quiet because of the storm outside, where no interruption could come to him, and where the incessant calls of business might be forgotten, his daughter's marriage came upon him with the shock of a new idea. A great fear seized him, and yet he was not the sort of man to admit the torment of a doubt when he had once decided. Whether it was that the storm affected his nerves against his will, he could not tell, but he felt under the influence of a strange instinct which had an authoritative power over him. He hurried up to the two girls as they stood in the porch, waiting for him, as they leisurely opened their umbrellas. He laid his hand on Beatrice's shoulder and looked straight into her dark eyes.

"My child, are you sure of him?" he said very earnestly.

A look of surprise came over her face, which changed into a happy smile.

"Yes, daddy dear, as sure as I am of you," she said simply, but with unbounded confidence.

Still he hesitated, whilst Flora walked on ahead picking her way carefully over the puddles. "If you have the slightest misgiving—never mind the fuss—remember what you do to-day is irrevocable, and for God's sake speak in time."

She was surprised at the agitation in his face as well as in his voice. It was so unlike her firm, resolute father to be so moved, but surprised as she was, she was not in the least shaken. "I'd rather give up my life," she said quietly, but in a tone that came straight from her heart. "Look, the storm is over and the sun is coming out. Isn't that a good omen?" she added joyously, as she linked her arm in his.

* * * *

The sun kept out all the rest of the morning, and it was pouring in at the windows now in a golden flood as she put on her large hat with the plumes of creamy feathers, and then she turned to Aunt Judy and felt that the worst trial was to come. She knelt down on the floor before her, unmindful of the new white frock with its golden embroideries and chiffon trimmings, and drew the frail figure towards her in her strong young arms.

"Not good bye, Auntie."

"Oh, my dear," in a choked voice.

That was all, as these two good friends parted—one going out, the other left behind.

(To be continued.)

A Diplomatic Debut.

By WALTER RICHARDS,

Author of "GEORGE TALBOT'S PROMISE," "UNDER THE CEDAR," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was a state ball at the Grand Ducal Palace, and Hugh Adair, a recently appointed Attaché of the British Embassy, was there as in duty bound. He was considered an undoubted acquisition to the *monde ou l'on s'amuse*, and not without reason, as he was good looking, aristocratic, passably rich, and endowed with an imperturbable sangfroid and audacity, which women without exception pronounced absolutely delightful. In addition to this he was ambitious—a fact known only to himself, and rather romantic—a fact which he would not have admitted for worlds.

He was anxious to exchange a few words with one of his colleagues, and was accordingly waiting in a sort of palm-decked arbour in the vestibule. It is amusing for a time watching people pass, and contrasting their characteristics and scraps of conversation, but he was beginning to find it pall, when the entry of Baron de Morat revived his flagging interest. The Baron was perhaps the best known personage in the capital. He was a French ex-financier of colossal wealth but doubtful origin, whose ingots procured him the *entrée* everywhere, and whose rôle in life seemed to be that of a rather malevolent Monte Christo. Just at present, too, he was more talked about than usual, as he was on the point of espousing a beautiful young Austrian girl, the Countess von Kronberg, the only daughter of a nobleman, the length of whose pedigree, which was bewildering, was as well known as the excessive tenuity of his purse.

As De Morat entered, Adair noticed he dropped a handkerchief, which was picked up and returned to him with a profound bow by one of the footmen. The Baron seemed surprised, smiled, said a few words in a low tone, and passed on. At that moment Von Kronberg and his daughter arrived, and Adair watched the meeting with interest.

"Good Heavens! what a lovely girl!" he muttered to himself, "but how pale!"

Josephine von Kronberg was pale indeed, and in the passionless, high-bred face, Adair fancied he detected an utter weariness, even, as her fiancé approached, a look of intense repugnance. De Morat made his salutations with an *empressement* which caused the young Englishman to ejaculate "cad," and with an air of complacent proprietorship which elicited the further monosyllable "brute!"

Short though the greeting was, Adair noticed that the Frenchman twice let his eyes wander from the proud, peerless face of his promised bride to the vulgar, Sclavonic countenance of the gorgeous footman who had returned him his handkerchief. Then the group passed on, and, to the Attaché's infinite relief, his friend Villiers at last arrived, and the two young men entered the magnificent drawing-room.

"Do you know the Von Kronbergs, Villiers?" asked Adair.

"Rather. The old General was a great friend of my father. They came together in the war of sixty-six."

"I should like to know him. Will you introduce me?"

"Of course. Come along; I want to speak to him."

Adair had a way of getting on with people—if he wanted to, and before long he and the General were on the best of terms. Presently, Josephine appeared with De Morat, and he fancied that Von Kronberg's good-humoured face lost a little of its careless gaiety. The necessary introductions being effected, Adair asked the Countess for a dance. De Morat glared.

"The Countess has been complaining of fatigue," he said with a sort of snarling smile.

"I am sorry," rejoined Adair blandly. "The Countess is much to be pitied. But perhaps she will be rested later on."

A faint smile on the beautiful face encouraged him to pursue his advantage.

"Permit me," he said to Josephine, taking her programme. "May I have the sixth valse? The sixth is a good number, don't you think, M. le Baron," he added, looking calmly at the Frenchman. He had intended his polite persiflage to be annoying, but he was certainly unprepared for its effect. De Morat started, bit his lips, changed colour and looked at Adair with an expression of mingled fury and anxiety. The Attaché's insouciant smile seemed

to reassure him, and with some well turned compliment to Josephine he began talking to Von Kronberg.

Adair returned the card to the Countess.

"Thank you," she said, and as their eyes met he felt sure that the conventional words had reference to the little verbal passage of arms between himself and the great De Morat. It seemed, too, to him as though, involuntarily, those glorious eyes had given another message, a message of misery and proud entreaty, and maiden fancy springing unbidden into hopeless life.

He had plenty of acquaintances at the ball, and chatted and flirted as gaily as was his wont, yet all the time in his heart, side by side with a strange perplexity about De Morat, was a new, sweet, bewildering feeling, kindled into being by the mute, pathetic eloquence of those mournful, violet eyes. It is, therefore, not much to be wondered at that before very long the pretty inanities of ball-room talk began to grate on him, and espying a deserted conservatory he betook himself there to ponder—so he insisted to himself—on *l'affaire De Morat*.

But as it happened the conservatory was not deserted. On a couch at the farther end a girl had flung herself, her head buried in her hands, and by her stood an elderly man, whose handsome, soldierly face was clouded with despair and self reproach.

"Josephine—my darling! this must not be. Your happiness shall not be sacrificed thus. I will defy him and take the consequences."

The pale face lifted and looked at the speaker with a wan smile of infinite tenderness.

"Hush! father dear. It must and shall be. I am foolish to-night. Perhaps—in time—I shall hate him less. Besides, there is no escape."

If there was the faintest suggestion of a query in the last words, the tiny hope it implied was soon crushed.

"Absolutely none, so far as I am concerned. The man stands too well. Were there even a shade of suspicion against him it would be different. But for all that you shall not suffer, my darling."

"I am resolved, dear; and, remember, it is my doing, not yours. Come. I'm going to be quite brave: *we* don't flinch, you know, even though the peril is a—De Morat," and with a piteous assumption of cheerfulness, Josephine rose, kissed her father's troubled brow,

and passed out on his arm, proud and regal and beautiful—but with a breaking heart.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Adair re-entered the ball-room after his involuntary eaves-dropping, he saw Von Kronberg and his daughter talking to young St. Foix, Secretary to the French Legation. On leaving them the latter joined his English confrère.

"*N'est ce pas qu'elle est belle, mon cher ?*" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"*Belle en faire ravir,*" replied Adair smiling. "Another victory for France, Vicomte. *On dit* that your De Morat has won the prize."

"Oh yes," said St. Foix gaily, "but I am afraid, *malheureusement*, that la grande nation cannot claim the honour of owning the estimable Baron. He's Swiss, I fancy."

"Happy Switzerland!" laughed Adair, and went off to claim his dance with the Countess, who was sufficiently "rested" to fulfil her engagement, and the Attaché led her off in triumph, profoundly regardless of the ill-concealed annoyance of De Morat. By adroit manœuvring Adair arranged, that when they ceased dancing, they found themselves close to the memorable conservatory, from which an effective *coup d'œil* of the room was obtained.

"What the newspapers will describe as a veritable fairyland," he remarked. "Your countrymen have a wonderful eye for effect."

Josephine smiled, but the smile died quickly away. She had enjoyed the dance, and for the time had forgotten De Morat, but the proximity of the conservatory brought back the wretched realities of life again.

"Apropos of fairyland," went on Adair, "what a pity it is that fairies and genii and benevolent enchanters are things of the past."

"It is indeed." There was an earnest ring in the common-place answer, which touched the Attaché to the heart.

"Yes; one of the latter would have a busy time of it. How we should all rush to him, and how grateful we should all be if, for example, he would 'confound our enemies,' or give us the boon we value most."

"Grateful indeed! Such an enchanter could scarcely ask too much."

For a moment the idea was reality to the girl. What would she

not give to the heaven-sent magician who would rid her of De Morat with safety to her father!

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Countess; if ever I turn wizard, I shall be sure of one grateful client. Shall we have another turn? Perhaps the divine afflatus may seize me during the waltz."

His tone was light, and his words merry nonsense, and yet there was something in both which caused Josephine's great violet eyes to give a quick enquiring glance at his face.

"I certainly will not balk so excellent an aspiration," she said. "If you *do* become so delightfully endowed, you must consider me as having the first claim on your powers."

"Yes; I promise you that faithfully, but perhaps I shall be terribly exigent in asking my reward." Try as he would, he could not prevent his voice shaking a little as he said the last word, and Josephine choked a sigh. How foolish it all was! this talking themselves into a half belief in a wild, childish story-book impossibility! Well, well, most of us have realized of some fair air-built castle, that—

"It was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight."

Meanwhile a few more turns of the dance, and then—reality and De Morat.

Adair left the Palace after that dance. He was going, he said laughingly to the countess, to study incantations forthwith.

"There'll be an awful row," he remarked to himself as he drove away, "and I may as well apply for indefinite leave at once. It's a comfort the brute's not French though. But it will give Von Kronberg a chance and perhaps save my beauty. If this doesn't answer we'll try something else, And now for Monsieur The Chief of Police!"

His carriage had stopped at the office of the functionary he had just named, who, he knew, had left the Palace only a few minutes before himself. The appearance at so unusual an hour of the English attaché caused some excitement in the Bureau, which was not lessened by the mysterious official gravity which Adair assumed. His interview with the Chief of Police was lengthy, and only the concluding words were caught by the officials in attendance.

"It is important, Herr Baron, that at present my name and that of my Government be kept in the back-ground. You had better,

too, communicate with me privately and not officially. I presume you will act at once?"

The Chief smiled: "M. le Baron will have his *déjeuner à la surprise* in four hours from now. We are deeply indebted to monsieur for his information." Adair bowed, smiled discreetly, murmured something vague about "dispatches," "extensive ramifications," and "interests to be conciliated," and devoutly trusting that the potent official he was addressing would discover some meaning in his explanations, took his leave.

By noon the town was in a state of intense excitement, shared in later in the day by all the European capitals. A well-known millionaire had been arrested for complicity with a nihilist plot of the most dastardly description; the evidence was said to be overwhelming, and the Grand Ducal police were held up to their brethren in other countries as models of knowledge and astuteness.

That afternoon the Chief called at the British Embassy and saw Adair.

"I'm in for it now!" remarked that gentleman *sotto voce*; "he's been deuced quick though; I quite calculated on two days before he would be able to report the 'rumours implicating the esteemed and magnificent De Morat to be absolutely without foundation.' Delighted to see you, Herr Baron."

The Herr Baron's reply was an ecstatic embrace. "Ah, my dear M. Adair! What a triumph! What skill! What consummate finesse! To think that we have him at last, this never-to-be-sufficiently-cursed Schliemann!"

Adair smiled. His first impression was that the awful blunder had driven the unlucky Chief out of his mind; his next that he was perpetrating a grim, retaliatory hoax, preparatory to overwhelming him with abuse. In either event to smile was the best thing to do, and it came easiest.

"I suppose I must not ask how you found it out, eh, cunning one? Ah, you English! So careless and debonnaire. Everything 'a deuced bore,' eh? And all the time a young attaché has quietly discovered the identity of the millionaire De Morat with the anarchist Schliemann, and one fine day communicates with the police, and the *schelm* is arrested with a cipher communication upon him enough to hang a thousand men! Ah, you are a marvel, M. Adair! A marvel!"

And when Adair had, with a quiet smile and modest disclaimer of the preternatural wisdom ascribed to him, bade farewell to his visitor, he began to agree with him.

"By Jove! I *am* a marvel—in the way of luck. I wanted to give that dear girl a chance by crying 'wolf' after that brute of a baron—and he turns out to be a real wolf with a vengeance. I suppose that footman was an accomplice and gave him the cipher—and my innocent reference to 'six' being a good number must have accidentally touched on one of their infernal secrets. I must try to bear my blushing honours becomingly. My faith! if they *don't* blush they ought to!"

Hugh Adair's rise in the diplomatic service was prompt and speedy. He is, indeed, already spoken of as the probable ambassador at a certain important Court—not the least of his recommendations being the acknowledged charm and beauty of his wife, *née* the Countess von Kronberg, whose father, it will be remembered, was victimized by the notorious Schliemann when posing as a millionaire, by an impudent and wholly fictitious charge of financial irregularities. The Countess to this day declares that her husband won her hand as his reward for a piece of "White Magic"; Adair, however, demurely refers to the incident in question as his "Diplomatic Debut."

The Body at Number Five.

By BARRETT KNOX,

Author of "ROBERT TRENT'S DREAM," "HAVRE AND ITS
ENVIRONS," "CATCHING A TARTAR," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"CAN it be only eight months since your return from India, Scrip? How much has happened to us in that short time!"

"Speak for yourself, man," answered my friend, "my life has been quiet enough."

"Perhaps. But you are always so aggravatingly calm. Most people would have shewn some interest about returning home, especially when they come back with the riches of Cræsus and the strength of a buffalo. You have developed neither a liver nor a temper, in fact, you are as cool as if you had been on an Arctic Expedition."

"You are hot enough for us both, Ted. If I were as excitable, who would have arranged all your business details lately? I believe you would have arrived in Scotland next week, minus luggage, licence and ring! Your head was turned long ago, and now you have lost your heart, leaving nothing but six foot four of body to make up for all deficiencies. Remember Ajax, and take warning.

' His body held vast room for entertainment,
And lower parts maintained their offices,
Only the garret, his exalted head,
Useless for wise recipe, was filled with lumber '

and so is yours!"

"No, it is *not*" I reply firmly. "It is filled with happiness. You may smile in that aggravatingly superior manner, but I don't believe you are a bit happier or wiser than the rest of us. You can give me no proof of what you profess, whereas I have given you ocular demonstration of the source of my happiness, past and present. Ethel is too beautiful not to win even your admiration, and if you

knew her mind as I do, you would own that her beauty runs through body, soul and spirit."

Scrip nodded appreciatively, but said no more—and for a while we both smoked away in "companionable silence." It was past nine o'clock. We had been busy with packing all day, and purposed starting for Scotland the next evening. I could hardly realize that the long wished for time had arrived, and that I, Edgar Hyde, artist, owner of an old dilapidated estate, with an equally dilapidated income, was in one month's time to marry the only daughter and heiress of Sir John Keel of Arrowmore!

Paul Solley, familiarly called P.S. or "Scrip," was to be my best man, and was included with me in kind old Sir John's invitation to Scotland. The shooting attracted Paul; Ethel and the scenery attracted me, and we looked forward to a delightful month together. I went off into a long reverie and only came back to realities on finding that my pipe was out. Half-an-hour passed, and my conscience smote me for being such a dull companion, and some fiend suggested, "Talk of something that interests Paul." I glanced at my friend; he was in a "brown study" and I knew quite well where his thoughts were roaming.

Paul had returned from India a thorough mystic, and when mounted on his hobby horse, would gallop away over the intricate course of Buddhist philosophy, leaving me in a state of bewilderment. I did not attempt to follow, when he talked impressively about "electric affinities," "astral bodies," etc., etc. I did not scoff at his creed, but simply maintained, that when I *saw* his astral body quit his material body, I should then believe he could do what at present he had only shewn me he could talk about. If I had only known! wild horses should not have torn the words from me that I next proceeded to utter.

"Paul, you have often promised to give me some proof of your supernatural powers. I wish you would gratify my curiosity to-night. I am sure you would be far cooler in your astral body than you are at present. This heat is simply unbearable!"

Paul gazed at me with his usual quietness, but his piercing eyes glowed in the dusk, as he answered—

"I have leave to grant your wish, but I fear you will repent having uttered it. I am called, but on what errand I know not, nor when I shall return."

"Oh! That won't do at all, old fellow, you must only go a short trip, for we must start by to-morrow night's limited mail. What reason could I give to Ethel, if you did not turn up with me?" Paul did not reply, and fearing that I had hurt his feelings by so bluntly refusing his offer, I hastened to add—

"It's awfully good of you to grant such a wild whim of mine, but don't bother about it now. We have all those painting things to pack still. Shall we see to them to-night or wait till to-morrow morning?" Paul did not answer. I looked anxiously at him, and as I moved, the light from the lamp fell upon his face. Deathly pale, with closed eyes, he looked so ill; I hastily exclaimed, "What's wrong?" He made no reply. I seized his hand, it felt limp and nerveless, and dropped heavily from my grasp. My first idea was that he had fainted, and wheeling the chair to the centre table, I poured water over his face, first a little, then a deluge: no signs of returning consciousness! After several minutes it dawned upon me, that my friend's astral body *had* departed, leaving me the custody of his inanimate form. This was interesting, very. I watched him for some time, he did not even appear to breathe. I stepped out on the balcony and gazed around, down the street, along my neighbours' balconies, and finally I scrutinised the sky, but no astral body of Mr. Paul Solley could be seen. Hearing a noise inside the room, I hurried back, and beheld the portly form of Mrs. Green, my landlady. "Beg pardon, sir, I knocked; you wished to see me about giving up your rooms?"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Green, certainly," I replied, hastily stepping between her and Paul. "But I think I would rather settle with you to-morrow about the rooms; I may want to keep them on. I will pay you up to the end of our present agreement. Here is the money."

"Thank you, sir. I only hope you will remain, for you are a good tenant to me. I will just sign the receipt. May I use your pen, sir?" Before I could stop her, she stepped aside to the writing table, signed the receipt, and turning round, caught sight of my friend.

"Good gracious, sir! What's the matter with Mr. Solley? He's as grey as my white cat! Is he ill?"

"I don't think he *is* very well," I stammered. "Do you think it is a sort of seizure, or faint? I have tried cold water, but it didn't do any good."

"Well, sir, for mercy's sake don't let him lie there. Here, help me put him on the sofa. 'Tis a faint, you may depend upon it, and the head should be kept low, and burnt feathers held to the nose."

The wretched woman! She seemed quite pleasantly excited.

"Here, Sarah!" running to the door and calling the general servant, "bring that old feather broom from the best front room."

Sarah appeared only too quickly, and energetic Mrs. Green first held the broom over the lamp until the smell of burning quills almost sent my spirit after Solley's, and then waved the smoking quills over Paul's face. No result. Mrs. Green suggested all kinds of useless remedies, ending with "Shall we fetch a doctor?"

This offer I firmly declined, saying also that I knew my friend was subject to these attacks, and that I was sure quiet was essential, that I could bring him round if they would kindly leave the room, etc., etc.

I succeeded at last in getting rid of mistress and maid. I then locked the door, and sat down by the sofa, waiting as calmly as might be for the return of my wandering friend. One hour passed, succeeded by a second.

Could I go to Scotland and leave Solley to follow me? How explain his absence? When would he return? etc., etc.

At last I fell asleep.

For some hours all was still. Then little curls of thin blue smoke might have been seen creeping under the door and through the boards. Thicker and thicker grew the air, the lamp burned dim, and I awoke with a start to hear that terrible cry of "Fire!"

I rushed to the door where Mrs. Green stood, thumping upon the panels, unlocked it, and feeling thankful that my rooms were on the ground floor, with only a flight of stone steps to descend into the street, I seized Paul's body and hurried out, leaving the fireman to rescue our luggage. Oh! Sally! Sally! why did you thrust that luckless feather broom into your housemaid's cupboard, while it was yet smouldering, amongst all the combustibles most suited for a conflagration, paper, firewood, matches, lamps and oily rags. In less than an hour the house was gutted, and much damage done to the dwellings on either side.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Green, coming up to me as I sat supporting Paul upon a pile of furniture on the opposite pavement, "Well, sir, it's a mercy my best house is the other side of the

street, and only just done up ready for letting (t'other one is well insured.) You'd best come in right away. Has the poor gentleman fainted again? No wonder! Here, bring him in."

Assisted by the policeman, we carried my friend's body into No. 5 and laid it upon a sofa.

"Was the gentlemen hurt or ill?" enquired the man. Mrs. Green saved me a reply.

"Oh, no, not hurt, he was ill and had fainted again from the smoke; he will soon come round."

I devoutly hoped he would, and meanwhile despatched both landlady and policeman after my belongings, and during their absence removed Paul to the bedroom.

Some hours passed, our excited neighbours had departed, and only a few people still watched the ruins of the smouldering house. Mrs. Green had brought me some breakfast, aided by the repentant and abject Sarah, whose face was still glazed with bitter tears. I had sent off a telegram to Scotland—

"Cannot start till Monday. Solley detained by business."

But as the day passed I began to feel distinctly exasperated with my friend. I felt it would not do to explain, or attempt to explain, matters to Mrs. Green. She would never understand. In fact, no one could understand. Paul would be supposed to be in a trance, and his body would be carefully watched and reported upon by the doctors! I knew such a proceeding would be quite contrary to his wishes.

My painting materials had been drenched with water, and it took me some hours to dry and sort them. The sketching tent was soaked, so I set it up and dried the canvasses and brushes. I had had one large case made to hold all my paraphernalia. It rather resembled a coffin, but was mightily convenient, though the porters grumbled somewhat, and also the hotel servants, at its unusual dimensions.

I had not received my regular daily letter from Ethel, but concluded that she thought I should have started before it could have reached me. However, the last post that night brought me a short note from Sir John, which had somehow been delayed en route.

"Ethel begs me to send you a few lines in case you read an account of her accident in the papers, and should be alarmed. She is quite unhurt, beyond a severe burn on her right hand, which will prevent her writing for some time. A child in one of our cottages set its

pinafore on fire, and would have been badly burnt if Ethel had not met it running from the house. The child is unhurt, and Ethel's hand alone suffered. I am glad you will be with us so soon." Then followed a wild left-handed scrawl from my darling, "I am not a bit bad, and it doesn't hurt now. E."

"Doesn't hurt *now*!" I exclaimed, as I paced up and down the room, "Why it must have been agony at the time," and I shuddered and turned sick with horror at the mere picture of the danger escaped. I longed to start at once, but the mail had gone, and wait I must. No question now of remaining with Paul's body. I would take care it was left in a safe place, but Ethel needed me, and hers was the first claim. How long I ramped up and down I don't remember, but when the time to act came, I was calm, externally, but determined—quite determined. I waited until Monday afternoon, then rang for Mrs. Green, and told her I wished to take on the sitting-room and bedroom for at any rate one month. That I had decided not to take any of my painting things with me, but that as the tent must dry slowly I should leave it set up in the bedroom. I particularly requested that Sarah should not dust or meddle with my canvasses and sketches.

Mrs. Green was delighted to let her rooms to an absent lodger for one month certain, and hinted that perhaps I would bring my wife back with me if we passed through London.

I replied that my plans were quite uncertain, but that probably Mr. Solley would call for my painting box, etc., and bring them to Scotland when he came. That he was detained in town on business.

"I hope he will see a doctor; them faints are dangerous. You said he was much better this morning, sir; is he still lying down?"

"He has gone out—he would go. I could not stop him—though it is most inconvenient—imprudent, I mean."

To pay Mrs. Green for a month's lodging and to get through dinner did not take me long. I then went into the back bedroom and locked the door.

Paul still remained unconscious, and finding him deaf to all words of entreaty, and that none of my powers of persuasion induced him to return, I seized the painting box, opened the long narrow lid, folded a blanket and put it inside, and then with some difficulty laid my friend carefully in the box, folding the blanket over all but his face. I then closed the lid, but locked the box first, so that a crack

for air remained—the lid being held up by the lock. I next loosely wrapped the cord round the case, put it and all my painting materials into a cupboard, which I locked, removing the key to my own safe custody. The tent being fairly dry, I put it with the easel and canvasses. I then left the bedroom, locking the door behind me.

"I shall take the key of my bedroom with me, Mrs. Green; all my sketches are there drying," I said to the landlady, who stood by to see me off.

"Oh! sir! I shall want to get in to dust and put things right!"

"They will do as they are; good-bye," I shouted, and making a bolt for the cab I escaped, taking as heavy a load with me as the one I left behind.

CHAPTER II.

No need to describe my journey to Scotland. I slept until we reached Crewe, and again until we arrived at Perth, where a hot breakfast was truly reviving.

It was not until 12.30 that I reached Arrowmore Station, and found the dogcart waiting. Half-an-hour's drive brought me to the Castle. Under the gateway stood Sir John with hearty welcome on every line of his handsome old face.

"Come along! come along! Very glad to see you. None the worse for your fire? That's right. Got your second telegram this morning. All right, all right! Here's Ethel." And my discreet old host having brought me to the drawing-room door, vanished, and at last I had my darling safely in my arms. Half-an-hour passed and I had heard all the details of her accident. Then the gong sounded.

"Luncheon already!" exclaimed Ethel. "You must be starving, and everyone will be waiting for us. You know which is your room—number fifteen. You will find us in the dining-room."

"Have you many people staying?" I asked, pausing door in hand.

"Five men—you know them all—and two girls with their parents. Be quick or lunch will be cold," and waving her hand she retreated to the dining-room, while I rushed upstairs and hastily changed my travelling things for cleaner garments. How dusty and grimy one feels after a night in the train!

I found the ladies and Sir John eager to hear particulars of my fire, and after gratifying their curiosity, came the question I was dreading.

"Where is Solley? Why did he go off so suddenly?"

"I can't tell you," I replied truthfully, "it was some Indian business I know, but he started in such haste I had no time to ask any questions. It is very provoking, for he does not know how long he may be detained. I hoped he might be able to start with me yesterday, but as he couldn't, I was not going to wait for him any longer."

Ethel smiled. "You looked rather fagged. Do you feel inclined to do as we planned this afternoon? We thought of driving you and papa to the South Lodge, to meet the other guns. They are murdering rabbits to-day."

I was quite ready—and a merry party we were. The woods and glades of Arrowmore are beautiful enough, and to be there again with Ethel was sufficient happiness to banish all anxious possibilities from my mind. When we met again for dinner one of our party was missing, Tony Douglas. Whatever mischief could be got into, Tony was certain to be thereof the prime instigator. He pretended to be very stupid, and was the butt of all the other men, but Tony was not nearly such a fool as he looked. We had just finished our fish when he appeared, his dark little face overcast with an expression of injured innocence. I should explain that Tony was an ardent fisherman, and had been out with a keeper, "on his own hook" as he expressed it, all day.

"No thanks to you, Douglas, that we have any fish for dinner!" said old Colonel Brown. "What made you so late?"

"Basket too heavy for you and Macann to carry between you?" drawled a man I heartily disliked—a certain Captain Dawson.

Douglas shook his head. "I sent Macann back about four o'clock."

"Why?" enquired one of the Miss Browns. "Didn't the fish bite?"

"Bite!" ejaculated the disappointed Tony, who had been crawling after the wily trout for some ten hours in the blazing sun, and trying every fly in his book, as he whipped and whipped with lightest hand and driest fly, as he was accustomed to do in Hampshire. "Bite! No, they were as shy as if I were using a Bird of Paradise on a halter!" Miss Brown, whose knowledge of the craft

was limited to perch fishing, with the common or garden worm, looked puzzled, and Sir John hastily interposed with, "Sent Macann home? Then I expect you came back the longest way."

"I guess I did, if a large house about three miles from here is in the way at *all*," grumbled Tony.

"A large house three miles off? Why, my dear fellow, what took you to Admiral Philpot's?"

"An admiral, is he? Thought he didn't like my wet boots. I believe he thought I was a burglar." We were all laughing at Douglas's dismal face and voice, and at last drew his story out.

"Macann told me to keep straight on by the river, until I came to the old bridge. Old it was, for when I reached it and quietly strolled across, it let me through into the water. Ugh! it wasn't deep, but I fell somehow in a heap, and my waders were full, my hat gone, and clothes soaked before I scrambled out. It was getting dusk by the time I had emptied my waders and rescued my hat."

"Why, man, the admiral's house is half the size of this. Did you go in?"

"Only into the library. I thought the hall seemed rather different. Supposed I came in the back way, but the old gentleman sitting by the fire, nearly had a fit when I sat down. 'Who are you?' said he. 'Staying in the house,' said I, 'when did *you* arrive?' 'I, sir?' said he, 'I arrived just seventy years ago, and who the dickens are *you*?'"

"Dear me! how awkward. What did you do?" enquired Miss Brown sympathetically.

"I fled," quoth Tony. "And if the old admiral stood long upon his doorstep, and is shouting as energetically still, as he was when I vanished, he will be voiceless for the future."

How we laughed! Then the buzz of our fourteen voices flowed on again: the sportsmen comparing notes, and Ethel and I managing to talk together every now and then, while scraps of the general conversation reached us. During one pause, I heard Colonel Brown boring poor Mrs. Calvert with one of his terrible riddles: "If a hen and a half lays an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs would twelve hens lay in six days?"

After a quarter of an hour's torment, Mrs. Calvert, who hated riddles and was feeble about figures, looked despairingly at Ethel,

who created a diversion by asking what "the total bag had been."

"Four hundred rabbits, sixteen hares, five wood pigeon and one woodcock, which Hyde bowled over by accident."

"Quite true, I fired at a rabbit, and killed the woodcock on the ground; did not even see it," I replied.

After dinner we joined the ladies in the music room, and practised some duets and glees, for a village concert was to take place on Thursday, and besides the usual local talent we had been asked to contribute some half dozen songs to the entertainment. Arrowmore is one of the best houses I know for a large party of people to be happy in, whatever the temper of the visitors or state of the weather. There is a large covered tennis-court, a good music-room, with an organ worked by water power, a capital billiard table, photographing rooms, a large lake full of perch, boats of various kinds, and such skating and curling in the winter! Add to this excellent shooting, and one of the pleasantest hosts to be found in Scotland. Lady Keel was an invalid, and seldom left her room until the afternoon, then she retired to the inner drawing-room before dinner, where one or two guests at a time were admitted. Dear old lady! Her beautiful face and gentle voice remained in the memory of many a man who came to Arrowmore as a visitor and left it as one of Lady Keel's friends. She never preached, never scolded, but the love in her eyes drew all hearts to her. Her gentle presence overshadowed the whole house with a spirit of refinement and purity that was felt though unseen.

By some subtle power she drew out and fostered the best part of every one, and I know no woman who so completely led and swayed, not only the tone of the general conversation, but had also the power of checking evil, and bringing out good, with no seeming effort. I felt half inclined to confide my difficulty about Paul to my kind hostess, but I knew she shared Sir John's dislike to everything connected with spiritualism. Sir John, indeed, was quite rabid on the subject. Tolerant on most points (even when discussing politics), let any one start the subject of table-turning, spirit-rapping, or even electro-biology, and at once the dear old man's face clouded over, and his hearty voice would be heard, in more than usually decided tones, firmly changing the topic of discussion.

Never, oh! never shall I forget the scene, when our host dis-

covered lying upon his hall table a volume, entitled "Karma." We were waiting for a neighbour who was to join our shooting party that morning. Keepers, dogs, guns and sportsmen were ready, and still the expected friend appeared not. We dawdled about for ten minutes, when a sudden explosion from Sir John brought me back into the hall. "Is this your book, sir?" (he was holding it as if it was infectious).

"No; I believe it is Captain Smyth's. I saw it with his papers and rugs when he arrived last night."

Sir John turned quietly to one of the footmen—"Take this book to Captain Smyth's room." No more was said, and I gave a hint to the book's owner to avoid all such literary work, and discussions upon the same, while at Arrowmore. But I noticed that never again was he invited to Sir John's.

So I kept my troubles to myself, and for the first week almost forget them. Paul would doubtless soon turn up, and what *was* the use of being worried about an affair I was powerless to alter. Nevertheless, it was rather unpleasant one day, when we had been after the grouse, had got to the "moors" in good time, and taken up our positions, two men in each "butt," except in mine—I was alone. We had felt a little uncertain about one of our guests, who had never shot driven grouse before, and I devoutly hoped he would not pepper me in his excitement. For exciting it is when the birds come over one like rockets. Whiz!

"I wonder how long we shall have to wait," I muttered.

"Not as long as you have kept me, I hope," answered Paul's voice, and turning round I beheld my friend.

"At last," I exclaimed. "Better late than never. Here, take my other gun, the birds will be on us in a minute. What has made you such an abominable time before you followed me?"

Paul looked grave as he answered, "Put down some of the delay, Ted, to your own account. I have been trying to return for the last week, but your painting box is so firmly corded that it presents an effectual barrier to the consummation which we both desire."

"My painting box! What do you mean, Paul?"

"What I say," replied my friend. "You have often wished to see my astral body, and it strikes me you are likely to see nothing more substantial, until you return to town, and unfasten the case in which you have made my solid flesh a prisoner." I gazed at Paul in silent

consternation, and he continued, "Mrs. Green has re-let your rooms, and has tightly corded your painting box. The present owner of the rooms seems to object to my nocturnal visits. He can't make up his mind whether I am a bona fide ghost, or whether his own brain is softening. Meanwhile, if he happens to explore the contents of the cupboard, and I am not there, it may make rather an unpleasant business for you."

"It's an unpleasant business already," I exclaimed angrily. "Why the dickens I ever sent you on that idiotic journey, I can't imagine, and your astral body must be an excessively incompetent person if it can't take care of itself. Do you mean to tell me that I must return to London simply to uncord that box?"

"I am afraid you must," replied Solley. "You see, a letter to Mrs. Green would hardly explain the difficulty."

I turned angrily away, and catching up my gun fired into the pack of grouse as they came over; then turning, I prepared to fire again, when a stinging blow knocked me flat. I slowly picked myself up, wondering what had happened. Solley had disappeared, and in his place stood the man from the next butt, looking more like a ghost than my lately departed friend.

"Are you hurt?" exclaimed the luckless sportsman. "I am afraid I fired across; *did* I hit you!"

I pointed to my right arm, which hung useless, and from which the blood was dripping fast.

"Call Dr. Boyd, will you, he is in the far butt, he will soon tie me up; I daresay it isn't much."

But it was. My arm was broken, and the next day found me helpless and in bed. I fretted over the possibilities of Paul's body being discovered, until I was in a fever, and Paul himself—no, it wasn't himself, but his double—haunted my room until I felt as frantic as Mrs. Green's lodger. All to no purpose. The days went by, the wedding was postponed, and I began to entertain gloomy thoughts about the recovery of my arm. Useless for six weeks it certainly was, but before the end of that time I was about again, my recovery being only delayed by a feverish attack from worry. At last I persuaded Ethel to let me make a hurried visit to London before our wedding, nominally to consult a specialist about my arm, but chiefly to liberate Paul Solley from my painting box. I registered an inward vow to have it out with my friend

when he was restored to himself. I spent the day previous to my journey boating and fishing with Ethel, and we returned to the Castle in time for tea, but found a crowd of callers, so I soon slipped away to the library, and as it grew dusk fell asleep upon the old square sofa. An hour must have passed before I woke. The room was dark, and from the open door of the adjoining apartment came the sound of Sir John's voice. "Show the man in here—I will see him before dinner as his business is urgent." I dosed again, until aroused by the stranger saying loudly, "Then, Sir John, I am sorry to say that I have a warrant for Mr. Edgar Hyde's arrest, on a charge of wilful murder."

"Mind what you say, fellow," thundered my kind old host. "How dare you make such an accusation! And who the dickens are you? How dare you steal into my house on the pretence of urgent business and then talk of arrest and murder, as calmly as if you were only the postman delivering the daily letters!"

"I am a detective from Scotland Yard, Sir John, and if you will allow me to tell you rather a long story I will explain. It is a black case for Mr. Hyde. I engaged rooms, about two months ago, at Mr. Hyde's late lodgings, and for a few nights nothing particular occurred; but on the fourth evening, I was disturbed by some one walking round my bed in the dark. I lit a candle but could see no one. This occurred not once, but during five successive nights. I then left the gas burning, and watched, and on the sixth night observed the folding doors into the sitting-room slowly open, and a gentleman enter the bedroom. He looked pale and thin, and seemed to be searching for something. He stooped, and looked under the bed, then turned to a corner cupboard and tried to open it. Meanwhile, I stole softly from my bed and endeavoured to seize my visitor, but my hands grasped the air only. The figure vanished. Now, sir, I am not a nervous man, but when I realised that a spirit had actually been in my room, I confess that my heart beat pretty quick."

"What has all this nonsense to do with Mr. Hyde?" interrupted Sir John. "Spirit, indeed; I can well believe that there had been too much spirit, not only in the room, but in *you*, sir. Ghosts are generally raised by alcoholic vapours!"

"Your pardon, Sir John, pray hear me patiently; whatever, or whoever my visitor was, remained a mystery until two nights ago.

Mrs. Green was with me in the sitting-room when the stranger appeared, and walked quietly into the bedroom. I darted after him, followed by the landlady, who seemed much agitated. The outer door was locked but the figure had again vanished. I then insisted upon the corner cupboard being opened. We found inside it a coffin-like box, which, upon examination, proved to contain a dead body—a body exactly similar to my ghostly visitor, and which Mrs. Green testified to being the remains of Mr. Paul Solley. The landlady also swore that Mr. Hyde had been much confused about his friend's apparent illness, that he had locked up his bedroom and that he had arranged to return after his wedding had taken place."

"I don't believe a word of Mrs. Green's story," broke in Ethel's indignant voice; "there is a mistake somewhere, which Mr. Hyde will be able to explain."

"Beg pardon, Miss, but if I am rightly informed, the gentleman has nearly given us all the slip; wasn't he just starting for London to-morrow morning and without any good reason. It is supposed he meant to escape abroad."

"Keep your suppositions to yourself, my friend," I quietly interposed, as I put my arm through Ethel's, "I have heard your story and can believe that you think it correct. I can, however, explain everything."

"I shall be glad if you can, sir," answered the detective. He evidently considered me a deeper villain than ever. "But you must return to London with me and explain matters there."

I turned from the man and spoke to Sir John, "Paul is not dead, only in a trance, he is often taken ill in this way, and thoroughly objects to its being known; he revives and seems none the worse as a rule, but this must have been a longer trance than usual. I knew he would be safe in my rooms. Mrs. Green must own that I retained my apartments, and that I told her Mr. Solley would come for my painting effects. The body would not have been disturbed until Paul naturally awoke, if Mrs. Green had not broken her word to me and taken in another lodger."

Sir John looked bewildered, the detective incredulous and impassive, but Ethel pressed my arm reassuringly. Others might doubt, but true love wavers not; she did not even seem anxious, and saw me off as bravely the next morning as if no detective had appeared upon the scene, to "murder sleep" the night before.

I had telegraphed to my lawyer to meet me at Euston, and it was a relief to see his shrewd but puzzled face.

In less than two hours from my arrival in town, I was on my way to Coleshill Street, in strict custody it is true, but with Jack Mayhew to pull me through the ordeal of "facing my victim."

I had firmly maintained that Solley was alive, though I granted that he might appear insensible, and Mayhew had insisted that we should be allowed to view the body, and that a doctor should accompany us. I laugh now, when recalling Detective Sharp's face, as we gravely entered the sitting-room. There, at the breakfast table, was seated Paul Solley, a newspaper in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. Both were hastily laid aside as he rose to greet us.

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated the detective.

But the tone of his voice suggested that he did not feel certain his sojourn upon Mount Gerizim would not be followed by a speedy exile to Mount Ebal.

Love.

Love is always sweet, folk say,
But yet, I rather doubt it,
If love be cool—why, any day,
I'd sooner be without it;
If my "dear" perchance should find
Some lips as sweet as mine are,
I'd toss my head, and "never mind"
Such love might "go to China."

If fickle love took wing to fly,
Or vanish'd like a bubble,
Would I call it back?—not I,
Such love's not worth the trouble.
But—if love be warm and true,
And never fickle—never,
I think I'd take it,—wouldn't you?
And keep that love for ever.

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Running after Shadows.

IN THREE PARTS.

BY FERIA.

CHAPTER I.

A ROUGH CHARACTER.

LEY RECTORY,

February 3rd.

"WILL you two fellows run down and spend a few days with me, if you have nothing better to do? I am a bachelor for the time being, as my wife has gone for a week to her people in Norfolk. It is a long time since I have seen you both; do come if possible.

Ever your old friend,

NED BLAINE."

I tossed the note across the table to my companion with an interrogatory, "What do you say, Giles?"

Giles perused it, and then looked up with a pleased smile.

"Bless the dear old boy, of course we'll go. But he does not mention any date, Hal."

"That's Ned all over," I answered with a laugh. "But it is of no consequence; suppose we go to-morrow, I believe we have done all we wanted to do in town."

"Yes, I fancy we polished off the last item yesterday, and we have called on all the people we wished to see, so there is really nothing to keep us smoke-drying up here any longer."

"Right, then; to-morrow be it. In the meantime you might be putting some of our things together, while I write home and let them know what we are up to."

At the time of which I speak, I, Harry Brooke, aged twenty-six, and my adopted brother, Giles Ferney (my senior by two years), were sitting at breakfast together in a comfortable room of one of the West End Hotels. Giles' father, Admiral Ferney, an old friend of my own father, had died when his son was only six years of age, leaving the child, whose mother had died at his birth, without a protector. My father, partly from affection for his dead friend,

and partly through compassion for the poor orphan, adopted the boy, and he and I and my two sisters had grown up happily together, our affection nothing marred by the fact of his being our brother only in name.

At the respective ages of twenty-two and twenty, when we were both together at Cambridge, my father died suddenly, and since that time we had been knocking about in different parts of the world, returning occasionally for a few months to the old home in Dorsetshire, as we never cared to leave our mother and sisters alone for any great length of time. It was only, however, to start off again on some hunting and collecting excursion, either into the heart of the Rockies or the wilds of Australia, in fact, wherever the fancy led us. We were both passionately fond of sport of all kinds, and had now a very valuable collection of foreign birds and beasts of every description. It was not long since we had returned from one of our expeditions, and after spending a month at home, had come up to London for a few days to call on old friends, and see to the stuffing and setting up of some of our most valuable specimens.

Edward Blaine, the author of the above epistle, was a college friend of ours, now a married man and rector of the parish of Ley, in Hampshire, the living having been in the gift of his family for many generations.

The next morning saw us tramping impatiently up and down the platform of that noisy and over-crowded station—Waterloo, waiting for the 12.45 down train to Winchester, our destination being about seven miles short of that city. The train drew up at last, not immoderately late, considering the thick fog that prevailed, and entering an empty second-class carriage we prepared to make ourselves comfortable. Just as the train was steaming out of the station there was a bustle on the platform, mingled with cries from excited porters and officials, and a man jumped on to the footboard of our compartment and swung himself in. A figure of medium stature but very strongly built, with great broad shoulders and a thick bull neck, the head large and covered with sandy-red hair, formed a *tout ensemble*, which, together with his energetic mode of entry, served at once to draw my attention. He was dressed as a common working man and carried the ordinary carpenter's bag, a large hammer serving as its handle. It struck me that whatever he might be now, he had in all probability been at one time in the

service of a railway company, possibly a guard, for no one but an active man accustomed to jumping on and off trains, would have attempted the feat he had just accomplished with apparent ease.

He seated himself opposite Giles with his face to the engine, and proceeded to probe the recesses of his jaw with one of the implements usually devoted to that purpose.

"Sharp bit of work, that," said I. "You have probably been on the line some years and learned the knack, eh?"

The man looked up quickly, and I noticed that his eyes were small, narrow, and steel grey, not unlike those of a pig, except for colour.

"No," he answered surlily, and then continued to search the cavities of his teeth, with an assiduity worthy of better objects, for I noticed that his teeth were particularly long and yellow.

At the first stoppage of the train I expected to see our red-headed *vis-à-vis* alight and change into another carriage, for he certainly had not the appearance of a second-class passenger. But he evidently had no such intention, for he sat still in his corner and commenced to tap his front teeth with a dirty-looking penknife.

"Confound the fellow," I muttered under my breath, "I've had about enough of him and his ugly molars. I wish to goodness he'd get out of it."

I might just as well have wished for the moon. There he sat, with his head thrown slightly back and his mouth half open, while that infernal tap, tap, tap continued without intermission. After this had gone on for a couple of hours, I could see that Giles, who had been asleep part of the time, was beginning to grow annoyed at the operation.

We were within two stations of our destination, when the man suddenly shut up his knife with a snap, and pulled out of his pocket a short black pipe and a paper of tobacco.

Now, if there is one thing more objectionable than any other to a refined smoker, it is the smell of coarse tobacco smoked in a rank clay pipe, and on this subject Giles was peculiarly sensitive.

"This is not a smoking carriage," he objected.

"It'll be smoky enough by the time I've done," came the quick reply.

I saw Giles' eyes flash, but he answered quietly, "There is a smoking compartment next door, into which you can change at the next station."

The man's answer was to strike a match very deliberately on his boot and apply it to the pipe. The next minute Giles had bent forward, snatched the pipe from between the smoker's lips, and flung it out of the window. The man sprang to his feet with a fierce oath, and drawing a large hammer from his bag (the handle of which I had previously noticed), he struck a heavy blow at Giles. The latter avoided the hammer by throwing himself backwards on the seat of the carriage, but before he could recover himself the man had raised the hammer to strike again.

Had that blow descended I shudder to think of the consequence; but just at that critical moment the handle of my umbrella (a stout, knotty piece of hazel root) rattled among his teeth, and he fell down with great violence upon the floor of the carriage. I wrenched the hammer from his grasp and flung it out of the window, together with his bag of tools, and our aggressor, thus rendered practically harmless, sat still on the floor and glared at us.

The train was running into the next station before I had decided in my mind whether to hand him over to the police, or let him go free with the loss of his property; but he saved me all further perplexity on that score, by suddenly springing up and jumping out of the carriage just as the train stopped.

This somewhat hasty proceeding was not altogether to my taste; in fact, I felt rather a fool, for no man cares to have his little private debates settled for him in this off-hand manner; besides, I felt convinced that Giles was feeling secretly amused at this abrupt termination of our little adventure. I cleared my throat, therefore, with a would-be nonchalant air, and tried to look as though our late prisoner had done the very thing I most desired. It was a wretched farce, however, and I felt that Giles saw through it, but he forebore any remark, and in due time the train drew up at the station of A—, where we alighted.

Now there lived in the town of A— an old maiden sister of my father's, and she would have taken it very unkindly on our part had we passed through the town without looking her up, so giving half-a-crown to a porter, for which he promised to convey our luggage to the Rectory on a truck after business hours, we decided to stay and take afternoon tea with her, and walk over to Ley afterwards, a distance of about two miles.

We found Aunt Jemima in excellent health, and very pleased to see

us, and after a capital tea and plenty of family talk we took our departure, promising to come and see her again before returning to Town. We had traversed about half the distance, which lay between A—— and the village of which our friend was rector, when we came to a place where the railway crossed the road. The road-way was spanned by a high, red brick archway, which gave forth a curious echo to our footsteps as we passed underneath. Giles and I looked at one another and stopped simultaneously. That echo recalled many a memory of boyish escapades and adventures, when it used to be the greatest delight of our lives to come and spend the holidays at the old homestead of our grandparents, who lived in the most beautiful spot in all Hampshire, a small village about two miles beyond Ley. We stood together for a few moments, looking up at the straight lines formed by the bricks over our heads, and I was conscious of a vague sense of surprise that they should look so exactly the same as they had done years ago, though had they in truth changed from red to yellow bricks, I might have had real cause for wonderment.

"Things don't alter much," said Giles, and I knew that his thoughts had been akin to my own.

I was about to return an answer of some kind, when we were startled by hearing a sort of shuffling sound overhead; then there was a heavy fall, and a loud curse rang out on the evening air, awakening the echoes of the old bridge, and causing a frightened blackbird to dart from his hiding place in a bush close by. I said "evening," but it was really not much more than five o'clock, though rapidly growing dark.

Running along the road a short way, we turned and looked up at the top of the railway embankment, which at that place was about thirty feet high. For a moment or so we saw nothing, and then there rose above the level of the parapet of the bridge the figure of a man. He stooped down and picked up something which looked like a bag; this he slung over his shoulder, supporting it, as far as I could make out in the failing light, by the handle of some implement, after the manner of carpenters. As he passed the end of the parapet his figure stood out boldly against the darkening sky, and something in his height and build seemed familiar to me.

"I do believe," I said quietly to Giles, "it is our friend of the railway carriage. He has walked back along the line to where we

threw out his tools, has found them, and is now either walking home or making for the nearest railway station."

"If that were so he would have stopped at A——; that is, provided he came all the way by the line," said Giles. "But whoever he is, he seems pretty screwed," he added, as we watched the man stumbling along by the side of the rails, every now and then catching his foot in a sleeper and falling headlong. Giles looked at his watch.

"There is no train for another couple of hours," said he, "and before that time the fellow will have reached the next station, that is if he keeps to the line. Come along, old chap, we shall be late, and Ned will think we are not coming till to-morrow."

We had got over another half mile at a good round pace when Giles suddenly said—

"It can't have been he; it's absurd to suppose it."

"Been he! who?" said I, rather at sea.

"Why, that smoking beast in the train."

"Oh! I see. But, my dear fellow, I have no doubt about it. Who else could it have been?"

"Why, some drunken navvy of course."

"Nonsense," said I. "It was our 'hammer and tongues' friend and no one else."

"Don't believe it," said Giles.

"Of course you don't," said I a little testily. "Because it makes the affair slightly romantic, you immediately begin shutting your eyes to facts. Oh Giles, Giles, when will you get a little romance inside that matter-of-fact head of yours."

"Steady, hold on, old chap," said Giles with a laugh. "Here you are telling me that I shut my eyes to facts, and then complaining that I am too matter-of-fact, all in a breath. Never mind, Hal," he added, linking his arm affectionately in mine; "so long as you have enough romance for the two of us we shall do very well."

I felt ashamed of myself for my little outburst, though still convinced that our friend of the railway carriage and the man on the bridge were one and the same individual, and we walked on in silence until we turned in at the gates of Ley Rectory.

CHAPTER II.

AMATEUR POLICE.

"Now, you fellows, draw your chairs nearer the fire and make yourselves comfortable. I have a bit of a yarn to unfold."

Giles and I complied with our host's request. We had just made an excellent dinner, washed down with old reminiscences and older port, and felt disposed to be comfortable. For Ned to have, a "yarn" to spin was something unusual, and we were proportionately curious.

He did not begin immediately, but sat leaning back with his elbow on the table and his chin resting on his hand. He was not much altered from what he had been years ago, except that he was slightly stouter, and, if possible, handsomer. His fine brown eyes were looking thoughtfully into the fire, and I fancied by certain lines on his face that, from some cause or another, he had been a good deal worried lately. A glance at Giles led me to believe that he too had noticed this, and I was glad, for I knew that he would not fail to cheer Ned up in the course of the evening.

Presently Blaine looked up and began abruptly, "In my letter to you, Hal, I told you that my wife had gone to stay with her parents in Norfolk. Well, that is only half the truth; the real fact is I was obliged to send her away for a time;" and he looked steadily at us to mark the effect of his words.

"Did she do this?" said Giles in a serio-comic tone, tapping his own nose, and indicating a slight scratch on the rector's handsome feature.

Ned caught up a table-napkin and threw it at him, which Giles dodged, with the result that it settled in the coal-scuttle, the lid of which was open.

"No," said he, smiling. "That was my cat, Alice. I fear she has not sufficient respect for her pastor. But, joking apart," he added in a more serious voice, "I am only speaking the truth. Marjory is not very strong just now, and there have been serious troubles in the village of late, which made her very nervous."

"So you sent her home, and had us down to act policemen in the village, eh? Well done, old man, but where are the disturbers

of the peace? Bring in one or two of them now to begin upon, will you," and Giles stood up and commenced to remove his coat.

Ned looked at him for a moment in astonishment, and then burst out laughing.

Giles sat down again. "That's right," said he. "A good laugh will raise your spirits, and then you can tell us your troubles. Any murders yet?" he continued in the tone of a man inquiring the price of butter.

"No, no," said Blaine, recovering himself and wiping his eyes. "What a fellow you are, Giles. But if you want a full, true, and particular account of my 'troubles,' as you call them, 'lend me your ears,' and you shall presently know as much about them as I do myself. Only don't interrupt me again, Giles."

"All right, old chap. Get up steam, and once you are under weigh you shall have a clear run."

"Well, you must know that for some time past, I have noticed two or three suspicious-looking characters loafing about the village. One of them, whom I find is named Harding, I have discovered to be the brother-in-law of the blacksmith; the other two appear to have no belongings in the place, and no one seems to know anything about them. They are seen chiefly at night, not appearing much in the daytime. The man Harding is known to travel often up and down the line—that is to say, he is frequently seen getting into the train after booking to London, but no one has ever seen him returning home; though after these excursions he is always to be found in the blacksmith's workshop next morning. There have been several robberies committed in the neighbourhood of late, not only in the way of house-breaking, but also upon pedestrians on the high road, after the fashion of the last century. The police have become suspicious; so much so, indeed, that quite recently they put on a special man, to patrol the roads and approaches in the neighbourhood of Ley. This was a fortnight or three weeks ago. The precaution seemed to have a good effect. For a day or two no more robberies were reported, and foot passengers were unmolested, when one morning the policeman was found half murdered in the private garden of a gentleman's house, not far from the church. The police then took more active steps to discover the perpetrators of this and the foregoing outrages. But all to no purpose! They have neither

been able to capture the thieves, nor to lay their hands on any of the stolen property, though they continued their investigations for upwards of two weeks. At the expiration of this period they appeared to give it up as hopeless, and withdrew their force; but four days ago I received a communication from the authorities, intimating that they were not content to leave matters in their present unsatisfactory condition, and asking if I would mind having one of their detectives in my house, suggesting, as the best cloak to his identity, that in the event of my complying with their request, I should represent the detective as being an old friend of mine come down on a short visit. I at once wrote to signify my ready acceptance of their proposals, and the detective came next day. He is a quiet, gentlemanly little man, possessed of an immense idea of his own importance and capabilities, an estimation justifiable as far as I am able to judge, for he seems clever and thoroughly understands his business. He will probably be in before long! When he is late, Bales puts something by for him. I have given all the servants a holiday, with the exception of Bales and Mrs. Wilson; you'll remember them of old? They both know the detective's true character—by-the-bye his name is Jensen—and are able to keep their own counsel. I have given out that Jensen is an old friend come to stay with me, though I fear that it is not quite square," and the poor clergyman sighed in his perplexity.

Giles and I smiled involuntarily at this truly characteristic wind-up of our old friend. In his college days Giles had been wont to say of him that Blaine would never be happy until he had "squared" even the circle.

"And now," said Blaine, "you know all about it. These proceedings have rendered poor Marjory rather nervous, and what with the worry, and the fact that she had been out of health for some little time, I began to feel anxious, and persuaded her, though with great difficulty, to go home for a few days, feeling sure she would benefit by the change. I then sent for you fellows to come and cheer me up a bit, and here we are."

"Right you are, my boy," cried Giles, in the hearty voice he always adopted when he wished to raise anyone's spirits. "Here we are, and here we remain until this business is ferreted out. But you will be wanting to write your Sunday sermon now, so come along, Hal, we'll go and take a turn out of doors." So saying,

he took me by the arm, and together we left the room and the house.

We passed through the high iron gates at the end of the carriage drive, and, turning to the left, we struck the high road.

After strolling on for a short while in silence, I presently remarked, "Rather curious all this, eh, Giles?"

"Pooh! Pooh!" he answered, with his never-to-be-taken-in-or-surprised look, "I don't see anything very curious about it; only a number of robberies rather cleverly executed, nothing more."

"Yes, but it's odd that the police have discovered nothing."

"Oh! as to that, it may be mere chance—the simplest thief will sometimes escape by a fluke, you know."

"True," said I, "but nevertheless it is more puzzling than you allow."

There are certain men in whom the bump of common sense (or is it that of incredulity) is so abnormally developed, that they can never bring themselves to admit the fact of anything being out of the common. With them nothing is beyond the reach of common analysis; everything has its simple solution. They form, each individually, a sort of animated mental syllabus, capable of so much condensed reasoning, but no more. I have even seen this form of abstract reasoning, this absolution, carried to such an excess with some men, as to render them, at times, incapable of crediting the evidence of their own senses.

Most of my readers will join with me in agreeing that this kind of person is particularly aggravating to the man of a more imaginative mind. To the former class belonged Giles—not to the extent I have ventured to depict, which, to my way of thinking, borders on thick-headedness—but sufficiently so to cause me, at times, a slight feeling of annoyance, when his prosaic reasoning and quiet, half amused incredulity, acted as a wet blanket upon my more romantic thoughts and ideas. And now, for the second time to-day, I felt a certain disappointment at his remarks, and began to wonder, secretly, if this want of mental animation (I can call it by no other name) were altogether natural, or whether it was, in part, assumed.

CHAPTER III.

MR. JENSEN.

WE had walked some little distance along the road, and now found ourselves just opposite a cottage well known to us both by sight and tradition. The cottage stood well back from the road, and was surrounded on all sides by a high clipped yew hedge from ten to twelve feet in height, which formed an archway over the gate. A rather wide bricked pathway led from the little gate in the hedge to the cottage door. To right and left of this pathway was a small plot of garden, stocked with overgrown currant and gooseberry bushes, and bounded on either side by the dark hedge. Behind the cottage was a small but dense plantation of yews, beyond that the open fields for about a couple of hundred yards, and then the railway. I should have previously mentioned that in this part of the country the railway ran parallel with the high road for many miles, its distance varying but never exceeding three or four hundred yards. But to return to the cottage.

As I have previously stated, Giles and I both knew it well, though, having never been inside, our knowledge was confined to the exterior, and the various legends concerning it, which were numerous.

Amongst other tales, it was said that it had once been the home of a miser, who for many years had used it as a repository wherein to secrete his bags of gold; but that one night some robbers broke in, and murdered the old man for the sake of his wealth. They then grew alarmed at what they had done, and began to cast about for the best means of hiding the corpse. Eventually they buried their victim beneath the stairs, which was as good a way as any other of disposing of the body, though it lacked originality. However, they did not find the gold, and the story goes, that in their rage and remorse they went out into the meadows, not a hundred yards from the cottage door, and drowned themselves in the river. Of course, ever after this, it was said that the old miser's spirit haunted the cottage at night.

How much of this story is true I do not know, but the fact remained, and for over fifty years it had been uninhabited, so strong

was the popular prejudice against the spot. 'There it stood, year after year, grim, silent, and empty.

Such thoughts as these were passing through my mind, as I stood looking over the gate at the lonely, useless dwelling, lighted up by the pale rays of the moon. Anything uncanny or ghostly always had a peculiar fascination for me, and I surveyed the cottage to-night with more than usual interest. Suddenly I started! Yes—no—yes. Did my eyes deceive me, or was it really a light which I saw in one of the lower windows? Yes, there it was again, a faint glimmer from inside the room, throwing the reflection of a human figure upon the drawn blind.

I grasped Giles' arm to attract his attention, and saw that his eyes were rivetted upon the spot which had so excited my interest. Suddenly he spoke, but in a low, hushed whisper.

"Didn't Blaine say it was still untenanted?"

"Yes," I answered in the same tone. "I asked him particularly, and he said that it was as empty as it had stood for the last fifty years."

"Come along then," he rejoined. "There is a ghost here, and we must investigate him."

I followed him through the gate, which opened noiselessly, and with a few strides we were within three feet of the window. As we stood there, the light from within shone out stronger than before, and the shadow of a woman's figure was outlined upon the blind. It struck me as odd that there should be this obstruction to the eyes of the outside world, in the window of an empty house.

Gently Giles grasped the handle of the cottage door, and slowly turned it. Would the door give, or would he find it fastened? A thrill of intense excitement ran through me! I mentally contrasted the excitement of animal hunting with that of ghost hunting, and was fain to give the palm to the latter. There is about it a certain creeping of the nerves, an all-pervading sense of uncertainty, which no other pursuit, however exhilarating, affords.

I glanced once more at the window. The light was gone. Then I heard the door creak slightly and in another moment I was beside Giles in the cottage. His hand was already upon the door of the room where we had seen the light. He turned the handle, but the door resisted. In an instant both our shoulders were against it, and it burst open with a crash.

All was dark within. I struck a light and looked around. Nothing met my sight but damp walls and an empty fireplace—there was not so much as a cupboard in the room.

With a grunt of disgust Giles turned tail and went out again, and I followed more slowly, shutting the cottage door behind me.

I had proceeded about half way down the path leading to the gate, when my eye, sharpened by years of travel and hunting, lit upon the figure of a man crouching behind a large currant bush. In a moment I had him covered with the revolver which I always carry in my hip pocket at night.

"Get up and show yourself," I said sternly.

The man rose with alacrity and came out into the moonlight.

"You need not shoot me, Mr. Brooke," he said quietly, "or is it Mr. Ferney?" he added.

I was slightly staggered for a moment, but before I could frame a reply, I heard Giles calling to me from the road. The next instant he came into sight, passing through the gate.

"What on earth are you delaying for? I've got it——" he was saying as he came towards me, but he stopped short on seeing my companion.

"So have I 'got it,'" said I rather grimly. "But I don't know what it is yet, though it seems to know me."

The unknown individual laughed lightly.

"Allow me to introduce myself, gentlemen," he said. "I am the—er—very particular friend of the Reverend Mr. Blaine, of this parish. Now, perhaps, we know one another."

I held out my hand. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Jensen," I said.

"No occasion, sir, no occasion, I assure you," he exclaimed, shaking my hand warmly. "I like to see a man ready with his barker at a moment's notice, though you should never pull the trigger, mind you, except as a last resource, yes, quite a last resource. But now, gentlemen, I have been the deeply interested witness of your proceedings for the last quarter of an hour, and I am of opinion that we ought to examine that door, which you so recently broke open.

"What good will that do?" said I.

The detective was about to answer, when Giles said abruptly, "You wish to see whether it was secured on the outside or inside."

The man only nodded as we turned towards the cottage, but he gave Giles a quick look indicative of surprise at his acuteness.

"I ought to have thought of it before," I heard Giles say to himself. "But there, I don't believe it's anything," he muttered.

We were soon once more within the cottage, when Jensen drew a dark lantern from under his coat and turned the slide. The bright light at once revealed to us the fact that the door had been fastened on the inside, for there were the sockets of two shattered bolts still clinging to the frame, and some of the fragments were scattered about the floor. Jensen examined them carefully.

"Quite clean," he said softly, "No sign of rust. Been recently used, I reckon."

"After a thorough investigation of the room, he came out and closed the door, and together we left the cottage.

Not one of us spoke until we reached the road, when as Giles closed the gate behind him he observed, "That gate works easily; it has been lately oiled."

The detective gave him another of those swift, comprehensive glances, and said quickly, "Have you ever been in the Force?" Then seeing Giles' look of surprise—"I beg pardon, sir, but you're so uncommonly sharp. Yes," he added after a pause, reverting to the former subject, "I oiled that gate myself."

"Then you have watched there before," said Giles.

"That's so," was the quiet rejoinder; "and I should have learned more by a few evenings' quiet watching, than you did by to-night's proceedings. But then you gents always are so hasty," he concluded, as though in excuse for our stupidity.

"I am sorry if I spoiled your game," Giles returned, smiling; "but then, you know, I had no idea you were there."

"No, that's true," said Jensen; and no one spoke again until the Rectory gates were reached. Then the detective pulled up suddenly and touched us lightly on the shoulder.

"You gentlemen both know this part of the world thoroughly, do you not?" said he.

"Every inch of it," I answered.

"Good. And you are well acquainted with the people and their ways, I believe."

"Just a little," said I.

"And you purpose making some stay here, so I understood Mr. Blaine to say?"

"We mean staying here until this affair is thoroughly sifted,"

said Giles, unconsciously repeating the words he had made use of earlier in the evening, and I smiled to myself in the dark as I realized by the tone of his voice, that he too was becoming interested in this strong quest after—what? After shadows, for at present it was nothing more. And yet I felt a keen sense of excitement as I thought, first upon Ned's strange story, and then the still stranger events of the evening. "Perhaps," thought I, "the old haunted cottage is going to show itself worthy of its reputation at last, and afford us a real bit of excitement." Ah! little did I dream of the fatal significance which that fell habitation was so shortly to assume. "You may count on any assistance which it is in our power to render you, Mr. Jensen," said I.

"Thank you, sir. You may both be of the greatest service to me in this matter, and with your co-operation I hope that another few days will see the mystery cleared up. Some curious ideas have struck me, but we'll talk of them later on." So saying, he passed through the gate, and we followed.

"One more word, gentlemen," he added as the gates closed behind us. "I would not mention anything of this evening's affair to Mr. Blaine. He has been a good deal worried already, and will sleep the better for not hearing anything fresh to-night." Giles and I readily acquiesced, and as we took off our coats in the hall, I felt that I already liked the little detective.

CHAPTER IV.

A COINCIDENCE.

THE next morning Giles and I—we shared one room—tumbled out of bed at an early hour. I was conscious of a pleasurable feeling of excitement. The events of the previous day kept recurring to my mind, and the more I thought over the matter the more I became convinced, that something very strange and unusual must lie at the root of the hitherto inexplicable mystery.

Giles, on the other hand, had quite recovered his usual unexcitable and somewhat combative frame of mind.

"Look here, Harry," said he presently, "don't you go running away with all sorts of improbable theories, about ghosts and haunted cottages and the like. If we are going to catch the burglars who

seem to be infesting this neighbourhood, it won't be by poking about in an old tumble-down cottage, and trying to convert ghosts out of wind and moonshine, neither will it be done by following and admiring the cunning tactics of a law official, who will spend his time oiling a gate, or skulking under a gooseberry bush, at one end of the village, while the robbers are breaking into a house at the other. No! We must look farther afield for the authors of these outrages than the mere centre of their depredations." He had hardly finished speaking when there was a knock at the door, and in response to my "come in," Jensen entered.

"You make an old proverb good, Mr. Jensen," said Giles, smiling, "for I was just speaking of you."

"Good morning, Mr. Ferney—good morning, Mr. Brook. I hope I see you both well, gentlemen."

We responded in a suitable manner to his greetings, and then he turned abruptly to Giles.

"You were saying last night, as you were returning to the cottage to look for your friend, that you had '*got*' something, sir. I presume you meant that some idea had struck you?"

"Well, yes," said Giles. "It struck me that I could account for the shadows upon the window blind."

"And your idea is —?"

"That they were merely shadows thrown by the yew trees upon the blind."

"And how do you account for the light in the room?"

Giles gave a slightly embarrassed laugh.

"Oh! as to that," said he, "I fancy that the moonlight aided by a touch of imagination is sufficient explanation."

The detective regarded him thoughtfully for a moment, and I could see that he was wondering whether this cool, matter-of-fact man really believed what he said.

"It's not of the least use to talk to Mr. Ferney," I broke in. "He always refuses to believe what he cannot explain."

The little detective coughed slightly, and his keen black eyes rested thoughtfully upon Giles' handsome face and figure, as he leant his six feet of height against the mantelpiece. Giles was taller than I was by about an inch, a fact of which I was sometimes rather jealous.

"Well," said Jensen, presently, "I believe we shall effect his cure before this business is cleared up." So saying he left the room.

"There goes a clever man running after shadows," said Giles contemptuously, as the door closed.

To our surprise it opened again, and the detective stood there with a smile upon his face.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, "for having overheard your last words." He paused momentarily and then continued. "We detectives, Mr. Ferney, are one and all obliged to work upon the principle by which the great Kingsley built up his wonderful works on the science of geology—that is to say, we have to work 'from the known to the unknown.' In other words, we have to make a definite standpoint, and from that standpoint we have to work out every possible theory in connection with it, which is compatible with common sense. This is what I am doing at the present moment, and this it is that causes you to form the opinion that I am—I use your own words—'running after shadows,' while it is my humble opinion that you, sir, are shutting your eyes to facts. We shall each work upon our own method, and time will show which is the better of the two." Having said this, with a good-natured bow and a smile he withdrew.

Giles laughed lightly as soon as the detective was out of hearing, but as he was giving a final brush to his hair, he said, "I believe I shall like that little man in spite of his conceit."

A few minutes later we went down to breakfast, where we found Ned looking brighter and better already for our cheering presence in the house.

We informed him of our last night's adventure, at which he looked grave.

Presently he turned to the detective and said, "Now, Jensen, what is your candid opinion concerning that cottage? I can hardly think, in spite of its loneliness, and the local superstitions attaching to it, which serve to keep it undisturbed, that the thieves would make their rendezvous so near the village."

"I don't know," said the detective thoughtfully. "Boldness will sometimes throw the police off the scent, where the utmost caution would fail to blind them. But whether they are making use of it or not, it will never do to let them suppose that such an idea has entered our heads at present. The entrance of these gentlemen last night was premature, very premature. We must watch, if necessary, until they commit another robbery; then if, as I more than

suspect, they carry their stolen property to the cottage to hide it, why, we will just drop on them in the act."

"If it were left to me," said Giles, "I should go at once to the cottage, and give it a thorough overhaul."

"No, sir. We might find the valuables its true, but I mean to have the men, and I dare not do anything at present to arouse their suspicions. We have a more than usually cunning gang to deal with. I would sooner get the darbies safely on their wrists, than recover all the plate and jewellery in the county. But I hope to do both. You must have patience, sir; we shall not have long to wait, I fancy."

(To be continued.)

The Ideal House.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

AS REGARDS THE STARTING POINT.

THE starting point of the ideal house must be, as a matter of course, the marriage of its occupants, and to begin with, we will suppose, for the sake of convenience, that the ideal house is the home of a newly married couple. It may be a modest house or a magnificent one, but in the face of the great question of its being an ideal house its size is a mere matter of detail. One may have an ideal house—a real home—in a tiny tiny flat in a very cheap quarter of London, or it may be in a lordly castle, or in the best part of Mayfair. It depends entirely upon its occupants whether it shall be ideal or not. Now I take it that it does not in the least matter when a couple are married whether they be high, low, rich or poor; whether the lady be like Rachel, comely and well-favoured, or like Leah, tender-eyed. It does not matter whether the young husband be a clerk in an office, a dashing subaltern in the Guards, an aspiring barrister, or a Member of Parliament. These things are mere details. The great and vital point is whether the young husband and wife are all in all to each other. Without this first great essential no home, however lordly, can be an ideal one.

Having started well, that is on the all-in-all principle, it is absolutely necessary that the young husband and wife shall not take everything for granted—that the husband shall not feel that there is nothing more to woo in his wife; that the wife shall not quietly accept as a certain fact that there is nothing on her side left for her husband to win.

The ambition of most girls is to be married. I am not speaking of those to whom untoward accidents may have happened, such as the death of a lover, the press of family circumstances, the breaking of an engagement, the many things which happen to make a great number of women feel that whatever they may do they will not choose to marry. I am speaking entirely of the natural instinct with which most girls start their young womanhood, and I say that it is a natural ambition and the ambition of most to be married, and to be married fairly soon. It is not, as a rule, so early an ambition with young men; but, a little time gone by, it is the haven to which most men look, or to which they find themselves drifting.

It is all rose-coloured at the start; yet married life is not easy. Young people have only to look back to the lives which they remember, and which have been enacted before them in the persons of their own parents, to know that marriage is not, to use a vulgar simile, "all beer and skittles." It is very difficult to learn to be married; for marriage is the up-rooting of everything, of the entire past life of both—husband as well as wife. It is not an easy thing to learn to accommodate yourself to the will and wishes of another person for an everlasting continuance. Married life does not consist of eight-hour days—they are all twenty-four. Likely enough the parents of neither have got on altogether without friction. Edwin probably thinks that his father and mother get along better than most; but he feels, when he is married to Angelina, that *she* will never make a fuss about the cigar smoke in the dining-room curtains, that nothing will ever happen to *his* dinner, and that when the cook gets drunk, Angelina will clear her out of the way before he comes back from business. Angelina, on her side, feels that whatever happens, her Edwin will never make her feel bad about money, as her papa periodically makes her mamma feel; she feels that Edwin will only be too eager to buy her things and indulge her from time to time, and that it will be a delight and a joy to be indulged as if she were a little girl with a new toy. And so it all works very well while it lasts—until there comes a

day when Edwin has not got a fiver to spend on Angelina's birthday present; another day when something has happened to the dinner; and a last more important day, when Angelina strongly objects to her husband joining the Freemasons, because he cannot tell her the secret. Believe me, it is not easy to be married! And well is it if Edwin never feels the shadow of Edwin the first, and Angelina never learns what it is to suspect the possible existence of an Angelina the second.

I have heard it said that marriage must be giving and taking. Too often these words, so excellent in theory, resolve themselves in practice into Edwin doing all the giving and Angelina doing all the taking. This, as a rule, only lasts for a time and results in dead failure. There must be giving and taking on both sides and in fully equal proportions.

To have a really ideal home our young couple must not carry the all-in-all idea too far; they must never run any idea to death; it is a fatal blunder. I knew a couple once who were all in all to each other. They really were—and I don't know that I ever despised any two human beings so thoroughly in the whole course of my life. Their all-in-allness was always to the front; you could never get rid of it; it was never out of sight for a moment. They had married on nothing—one does not blame them for that; many of the happiest marriages and most successful alliances have been started on a similar basis—but with this couple their affection for each other was their daily life; it was also, alas, the daily life of their children, and it was the periodical vexation of all their friends and acquaintances. This Angelina always wore the curls of her girlhood; we, as young people, irreverently called them "kinks." She was a strictly ornamental person—not of a type of beauty that I have ever admired myself—but she was his ideal. "Look at her," I have heard him say, *à propos* of nothing, in the midst of a large gathering of people; "would anybody think that she was the mother of fourteen children?" So far as Angelina's looks went, at the period to which I am referring, she might have been the mother of a hundred and fourteen children; but Edwin never seemed to see it! They lived a life of their own, apart from their family, apart from their children. They passed most of their time strictly in retirement, or they took long walks together; they went away alone; they did everything together, to the absolute exclusion of the fourteen children, who got themselves up as best they could,

the elder ones mothering the younger ones, stitching, sewing, slaving, fagging for them; the boys turning out and doing as well as circumstances permitted, with no help, no counsel, no wisdom from their father, beyond eternal praise of his Angelina. The girls drifted out in like manner. Debts accumulated, and were wiped off several times—you know the process—and still that maddening all-in-allness continued. "I sacrificed my whole career because I married young," I once heard this passionate patriarch exclaim, "but the mother of fourteen has more than made up to me for anything I might have done." Well, I don't know that he said exactly the "mother of fourteen," but that is what his tone conveyed, you know. Now, for my part, I think that this particular Angelina would have made a much more ideal wife had she been a little more useful instead of being so purely ornamental. While her husband was writing his sermons, she might at least have mended some of the stockings belonging to the fourteen. But no, it pleased her Edwin that she should always be dainty—a kind of airy fairy Lilian. At sixteen an airy fairy Lilian in a single page of print is a delightful creation; at sixty, in the every-day life of a family of sixteen on an income of some three hundred a year, she is absurd.

I think that in every situation where attainment is desirable—and what situation is there in which there is absolutely nothing to win in the future?—a climber should always bear in mind that there is a great danger ever present—the danger of climbing too far, of climbing so that he may topple over on the other side. The Edwin who buys pearls for Angelina when he ought to be paying the butcher's bill succeeds in doing this, and the Angelina who spends her whole life in an atmosphere of homage when her children's stockings are troubled with "potatoes," may be classed in the same category. All Edwins and Angelinas have other duties than towards each other, and the duties which go to make up an ideal married life do not stop with the pleasure which one takes in the society of the other.

I said just now that there should be giving and taking on both sides. A very curious instance of the want of that giving and taking came under my notice a short time ago. An Angelina that I know greatly desired to learn to ride a bicycle, and, like a good wife, she mooted the subject to her husband. His instant reply was, "Oh, no, don't; it is so dangerous; think if anything happened to you; pray don't dream of it!" And seeing that he really meant it she gave up her idea.

Within a week this Edwin came to Angelina and said, "Oh, Angelina, I have been offered a share in a yacht with three other men."

"What sized yacht?" said Angelina.

"Oh, just a small yacht."

"A steam yacht?" said Angelina.

"No, no, a little pleasure yacht—a ten-tonner. Desmond has got it for duck shooting along the coast. I wouldn't take the share without mentioning it to you, but I should enjoy it immensely."

"Is it a safe yacht?" said Angelina.

"No, I don't know that it is, particularly."

"Is it a safe coast?"

"Oh, well, the coast is rather dangerous."

"Oh," said Angelina, "I don't want to be disagreeable, but you objected to my learning to bike on account of the danger. One is not bound to have a smash on a bike, but I should never see you go out in that cockle-shell without living with my heart in my mouth until you were safely home again, and I strongly object to your taking that share in the yacht."

"Oh, of course, if you feel like that," said Edwin, "I won't dream of it; but the idea that you might be anxious never occurred to me."

Those who wish to lay the foundation of an ideal house must remember that it is never the large things which are difficult to manage. A great trouble is easily met, perhaps for the simple reason that it must be met, that we cannot get out of its road, cannot skirt round it, cannot surmount it, cannot creep under it, we *must* face it. There comes death into the house; there is but one course to take, it is that of endurance. There comes utter ruin; well, one knows the worst. It may be sheer misfortune, it may be carelessness, it may be miscalculation; the need is the same; the result is the same; and most Angelinas will buckle to and make the best of it.

But the small things are less easy to bear. I knew a wife once, a faded, querulous Angelina, who passed an existence of torture because Edwin would whistle. I know an Edwin, devoted to his wife, who feels at times positively murderous because she will play the Devil's tattoo upon any flat furniture that comes to hand. I know another Angelina, whose Edwin will always use her towels instead of his own. It is a small thing; Edwin has to walk across the room to get at her towels, and he is quite unconscious of what he does; but he does it all the same. I know another Edwin whose perpetual thorn is that all the

rubbish in the household is shot into his study. "My study," he says, "is a rubbish heap. It is a small thing; I might be just as happy to find Charlie's top among my letters and Gracie's doll occupying the chair on which I wish to sit, but it worries one, and every day the annoyance remains the same." I know another Edwin who adores his Angelina, and vexes his soul in season and out of season because she *will* discuss business; she will talk of stocks and shares, of Companies, of all manner of things of which she has absolutely no knowledge. I know yet another Angelina whose Edwin will persist in giving her the portion which she likes least at dinner. He is absolutely unknowing of this peculiarity. He will take a nice piece of the tail end of a sole and say "There, that is the part you like, dearest, isn't it?" Her particular fancy is the other end of the fish. At first she used to suffer in silence, at last she spoke; and therein she showed her wisdom. Married people should always speak, and speak quite plainly when anything that the other one does hurts or offends them. I know an Angelina who loathes roast mutton; it is actual penance to her to sit at a table graced by this particular food. In a small household it is not convenient always to have a second *plat*, and for ten years this poor woman immolated herself, at least once a week, on the altar of wifely duty. So nauseous to her was this particular dish, that she could never get through the few mouthfuls she forced herself to eat without liberal helpings of red currant jelly. At the end of ten years she happened to say quite casually "Well, I think we will have roast mutton; you are so fond of it." Edwin looked up in mild surprise. "I—I fond of roast mutton?" he said. "Oh, you are quite mistaken, Angelina, I only eat it to please you. I dislike it rather than otherwise." So ten years of self-immolation had passed merely for the want of putting the question plainly. Husbands and wives should never be afraid to speak to each other; such reticence can only lead to misunderstanding and eventually to friction.

All wives ought to have a housekeeping allowance and a dress allowance, and dates should be fixed and kept to rigidly when these sums should be paid without grumbling. I believe that a good half of the troubles of married life come from the fact that moneys are doled out grudgingly, especially those for the wife's personal requirements, whereas the wife has fully as much right to suitable allowances as she would have if she were only a paid housekeeper. No husband can give his wife more than he has got, but, if he expects a certain

style, he should be prepared to give the means of keeping up that style easily. I once knew an Edwin who bought ten pairs of gloves for himself and one for Angelina. That Edwin would have been all the better if some one had punched his head ! It was a wretched household, and presided over by an Angelina of many cares to whom Edwin was not a comfort but a taskmaster. I knew another household in which the Angelina gave thirty guineas for a sealskin coat when her Edwin had not a decent suit to wear. This Angelina happened to have a little income of her own, and she spent it religiously upon herself, no matter what state her husband's finances happened to be in. They parted years ago, and I, for one, have never blamed any shortcomings which I have heard attributed to that particular Edwin.

No one is perfect ; there will always be faults on both sides ; but do let all young people who are thinking and dreaming of the ideal house remember that the house will be as they themselves make it. It must be built upon a sure foundation. If the house is built upon a bog, that bog may shift at any moment ; if the house is built upon sand, upon certain kinds of clay, upon any insecure foundation, there is no knowing when it may give or crack in some corner or other ; but a house that is built upon the rock of mutual consideration is well nigh as sure as the stars are certain in their courses ; and for Edwin and Angelina to be all in all to each other, but with a due sense of what is meet and right, is to lay a safe foundation for the ideal house.

(To be continued.)

“*Loyale je serais, durant ma vie.*”

By LUCY HARDY.

“What a quantity of old music!”

“It must have belonged to Helen when she was a girl.”

The first speaker, a young wife of some twenty summers, continued to turn over a pile of the songs fashionable some twenty-five or thirty years ago; and occasionally struck a few notes of their accompaniment on a piano.

“Ruby,” “The Little Wee Dog,” “Little Bird”;—this seems a pretty tune, Gerard,” and the girl warbled a few notes from the last-named song, which relates how the ‘little bird on the green tree’ witnessed the parting of the lovers;—“What is he saying, and what answers she, *loyale je serais, durant ma vie.*”

“Helen learnt that ages ago when she was studying under Garcia, and I remember her singing it; it was a favorite song of my father’s when I was a tiny boy,” remarked the young man who stood by the piano.

“*Loyale je serais, durant ma vie,*” said Lilius Tresillian, “it is the *woman* who promises that.”

“Come, little lady, it is *your* sex which is usually charged with fickleness,” replied Gerard laughing, as he stooped to kiss the brow of his year-old wife. It had been a “love match” on both sides; and the pair had not yet outgrown their “honeymoon.”

“I like that promise, it is better than the one given in the marriage service,” said Lilius, as she struck a few chords half absently, “I *hated* that odious ‘till death us *do part*,’ as I said it. ‘*Loyale je serais, durant ma vie.*’ Gerard,” turning suddenly to him, “if—if I were not with you always, would you *quite* forget me?—or remember me all your life long?”

“Sweetheart,” said the young man earnestly, folding her in his arms as he spoke, “why will you talk in this dismal way? If we were parted—which is an awful thought we need not dwell upon for many a year to come—why the very light of my life would go out with you, *and you know it.* You are not about to become jealous, are you, my Lilly ”

Lilias laughed.

"It is silly and selfish I know, but somehow one does not like to think one will be forgotten."

"My heart's queen, never need fear that," said Gerard fondly (they were young still, and very much in love with each other.) "We mean to live to be a model old Darby and Joan; and whenever the end comes for one of us, I hope the other will be too aged to linger long lonely. Why I look forward to seeing you a stately old grandmother Lil—when the *heir's heir*——"

"What nonsense you talk," cried the young wife with a blush and a smile.

Fate had certainly been kind to the wedded couple. They were young, rich, devotedly attached to each other; and the last blessing—that of a child to inherit Sir Gerard's property, was shortly to be granted them. For centuries it had been a family tradition that the heir of the Tresillians should be born under the roof of the old family mansion in the West of England; and hither Gerard had brought his young wife for that happy summer at whose close he expected his firstborn child to see the light. The Tresillians were very popular in the neighbourhood; for generations they had been known as good landlords, kindly neighbours; and the expected event at the Hall was to be greeted with bell-ringing and festivities, as an occurrence of local importance and interest.

Summer waned into autumn; and with the roses a fairer flower passed away. It was in a muffled knell, not in a joyful peal, that the bells of the old church tower rang out on one dim September morning; and behind the shrouded windows of the Hall lay the dead girl-mother with her motionless babe on her quiet breast.

It was "awful to see poor Tresillian," all his friends sympathetically said, as the young husband—he was barely twenty-five—stood beside his wife's grave on the day of her funeral; in that calm, tearless, stony grief, which is more terrible to witness than any noisy demonstrations of sorrow. That the shock would kill him was freely whispered; and the presumptive heir to the estate (an elderly and somewhat dissolute cousin, who eked out his half-pay at foreign gambling tables, and who had utterly given up any hope of the succession when Gerard married), began now to wonder if fate was about to do him an unexpected good turn.

With a stern self repression, Gerard Tresillian refused to leave the

house which he had decorated and prepared for his bride ; although he shrank from entering *her* rooms, rooms which still bore so many traces of their loved former occupant. Rejecting sympathy, refusing to see visitors, the young man shut himself up with his grief, echoing George Elliott's words " here I and sorrow sit."

" You have carried my heart to the grave with you, my darling," he would whisper to himself, " and life must be dark to me hereafter till its end."

One interest and occupation still remained to the young widower. His darling should sleep under such a monument as had never before been seen in that quiet country churchyard. Gerard had not laid his wife — so young, so fair — in the dreary vault where generations of his ancestors rested ; he had chosen a spot in the open churchyard, where the early sunbeams fell, where the birds sang overhead, and the daisies blossomed around. Here his wife and his babe, and himself, when his turn came, should rest ; but above Lilius' grave should rise a monument which should fittingly commemorate his love as well as his loss. Marble, pure as the sleeper's heart, should be cunningly wrought and carved in her honour ; and Gerard, who himself was something of an artist, pleased himself by sketching out the design of a graceful memorial ; where marble lilies should blossom over their namesake, and the artist's hand illustrate the husband's love. The work itself was to be entrusted to a famous Italian sculptor, whose studio the wife and husband had visited together when on their bridal tour ; Lilius had then laughingly said that she should like to possess a specimen of Signor ——'s skill ; Gerard would place one now over her grave. There was a sort of consolation in this almost wasteful profusion — this erecting of costly sculpture in a remote country graveyard, where the rustics, who would, save himself, be its only beholders, were utterly incapable of appreciating its merits. But who does not know the feeling which prompts us to lavish with loving reckless hands our best and costliest upon our beloved dead — to honour the silent sleepers according to our love, rather than with regard to their present knowledge of that love ?

So the commission for a fair monument, regardless of cost, was duly transmitted to Florence ; and graciously accepted by the famous sculptor. But a long series of delays retarded its execution. Signor —— possessed a European reputation, and had other commissions — some from crowned heads — to execute in advance of

Gerard's ; and it is needless to say that the great man was not to be hurried or dictated to. Then, when the sculptor was at leisure to think about this humbler commission, there was much further delay in procuring a block of marble of the peculiar kind and purity desired ; for Signor —— had all an artist's pride in his works, small as well as great ; and was resolved to fully act up to the only instructions given him by his English client, viz., to make the memorial as perfect as possible, regardless of cost. Then the exact design of the monument ; the tall slender cross, with its clustering lilies at the base, the exquisite tracery, the delicate carvings, were all to be discussed and settled betwixt artist and client ; and so the months sped away, and Gerard's impatience was not yet gratified by seeing the memorial of his love placed over the grave, which he never failed to visit daily.

It was a long, terrible winter ; and the young widower, shut up as an absolute recluse, excited the sympathy, also the gossip, of the neighbourhood. Was he going mad—melancholy mad—with grief ?

One day in the early spring Gerard was surprised by a visit from his married sister, his only surviving relation. She was over twenty years his senior—there seemed to have been a fatality about the birth of male heirs to the Tresillians for the last two generations ; Gerard himself had entered the world years after his parents had given up hopes of possessing a second child ; and his birth had cost his mother her life. His sister Helen had well supplied this parent's place, and had never left the old home until the death of their father, some five years before Gerard's marriage. Then Miss Tresillian, long past her first youth, had made a suitable and calmly happy union, with a middle-aged diplomatist, with whom she left England. Sir William Beltram was holding an appointment in the East at the time of Gerard's marriage and widowhood, so Lady Beltram could only express her sympathy with her brother by letter ; but now her husband had been transferred to Vienna the accounts given of Gerard's condition by mutual friends, decided Lady Beltram on making a sudden descent upon her brother, and forcing him to return with her to the gay Austrian capital.

For a while Gerard resolutely withstood her pleadings, but yielded at length. He was much attached to his sister, she had always possessed great influence over him ; and, truth to tell, there was beginning to spring up in his heart a certain weariness of his present life—*perhaps a little of his sorrow.*

Spring had come, and Nature was awakening from her winter sleep; there was a kind of infectious brightness in the very air and sunshine. So, though (as Gerard often reminded his sister), "his heart was buried with his lost Liliás," he was partly persuaded, partly forced (Lady Beltram was a woman of very resolute purpose) to accompany her back to Vienna.

Lady Beltram was very wise in her management. In her own secret heart she had quite resolved that this early "boy and girl attachment" was not to spoil her brother's after career; she herself was a very unromantic person, and had little sympathy with what she called "sentiment." If poor Liliás had lived, no doubt she would have made Gerard a good enough wife; but this romantic folly of perpetually grieving over her tomb was too absurd. "*Le roi est mort—vive le roi*," was Lady Beltram's philosophy; her brother was a young man still, and had a career before him.

But Lady Beltram was too wise a woman to betray her sentiments to her brother; she listened, with at least an appearance of interest, to the oft-repeated stories of the trivial acts and words of the departed which flow so naturally from the lips of mourners; she never forced her brother into society, never rebuked him for his grief, but yet never relaxed from her settled purpose to make the memory of his past life—and love—a dead and buried thing.

And Gerard was not proof against her influence, and that of the new scenes and surroundings amid which he found himself. Love, as he often told himself, was at an end for himself now, but ambition remained; and, merely as a means of stifling his sorrow by employment, he was persuaded to accept an appointment in the diplomatic service, of which Sir William's interest procured him the offer; and then his duties naturally forced him into society, and he met Charlotte Carrington.

It is easy to guess the sequel; Miss Carrington, a clever, brilliant, attractive woman, older for her twenty-four years than was Gerard for his twenty-six, decided that a marriage with the handsome and wealthy young widower would suit her well enough, and played her cards accordingly; warmly seconded by Lady Beltram, who desired nothing better for her brother than such a capable and well-born, if not well-endowed wife.

"Gerard's own fortune is ample, and Charlotte is just the woman to be invaluable to him in a political career," remarked Lady Beltram

to her husband. Was the memory of a tomb in England, of a dead girlish face, to come between Gerard and his life's prospects?

Tresillian believed himself constant for a long time—he often told himself it was his ambition, not his heart, which was influenced by Charlotte. Even when he made his proposal he spoke of his earlier love; and dwelt rather upon his deep esteem, his high regard, than on his devoted *affection* for herself.

Miss Carrington secretly smiled a little as she listened. She was even more unromantic than Lady Beltram; it was her lover's position and estate which she was desirous of sharing—devoted affection did not enter much into her category of matrimonial advantages. Also, she knew her own powers of fascination, and Gerard's weakness.

"I can make that foolish fellow madly in love with me if I choose," thought the haughty beauty, with a self-satisfied smile. And her words proved true; for Gerard, who had in truth seen but little of the world, speedily became abjectly enslaved to his clever, worldly-wise, bride elect; who knew so well how to play upon him for her own purposes. That tender, simple idyll of his first marriage was being rapidly forgotten under the spells of the newly-found Circe.

* * * *

Fifteen months had passed away since Lilius Tresillian's golden head had been laid under the daisies, and the old West Country churchyard was again full of village spectators, but this time of joyful ones. It was Gerard Tresillian's second wedding day; and, by an unexpected chain of circumstances, it chanced that this bridal was to take place in the Church of his native village.

Charlotte Carrington's father had, unexpectedly (as "next of kin"), inherited a small estate contiguous to that of his future son-in-law; and nothing would satisfy the bride elect but an orthodox "country wedding," with all the pomp and circumstance which attends such festivities in the families of country magnates. Gerard agreed to her wish in this as in all other respects; his infatuation, was at present, complete.

Amid the eager crowd assembled at the Church to greet the arrival of the bride and bridegroom, no one heeded the operations of a small party of workmen who had arrived from London by an early train, and who were now engaged in a remote corner of the churchyard, in setting up a monument. The villagers who lined each side of the pathway to the Church, (children with flowers to strew before the bride

being placed in the foremost row) were far too occupied in looking for the arrival of the wedding party to concern themselves about anything which was taking place behind them in the churchyard.

The bridal party duly arrived and entered the little church, which was immediately crowded almost to suffocation by the concourse of onlookers. Mr. McLeod, the elderly family lawyer, who had come from London to attend the wedding ceremony, and whose train had arrived late, came up to find the very church porch crammed with spectators. The old lawyer had attended too many weddings in his time to be especially keen about squeezing in to witness this one; he stood contentedly outside in the churchyard, and thus attracted the attention of the foreman in charge of the workmen.

"Beg pardon, sir," said this individual, coming up, "but do you know if Sir Gerard Tresillian is at the Hall now; you remember me, from Messrs. Blank's"—naming the firm of stone-masons who had been entrusted with the erection of Lilius' monument after it should arrive in England, and with whom Mr. McLeod had often held communications on the subject.

"A nice trouble we have had with the Signor and his delays about the carving," went on the man, "I often thought the monument would never come at all. However, it has arrived at last, and, Sir Gerard's orders being so particular about its being set up the very moment it *did* come to hand, we started off by the early train to-day to do the job. And most uncommon well it looks now it is up; if Sir Gerard was at home—he was just going abroad when we last heard from him—I thought I'd call to tell him it is finished. He'd may be like to see it."

"Sir Gerard is in England now, in fact he is in the Church at the present moment," said Mr. McLeod, rather drily.

"Then I might speak to him as he comes out," said the foreman; ignorant that the "grand wedding" had any connection with his patron.

"I don't think I'd just do that, my man," said the old Scotchman, yet more drily, "because you see, the monument you've just set up is one to Sir Gerard's *first* wife, and what he's doing in the Church now is *marrying a second*!"

* * * *

The organ pealed forth the "Wedding March" and the joy bells clashed out as the newly wedded pair passed down the Church path

under the lime trees. In the background, the rays of the wintry sunshine flickered and danced upon one of the most exquisite of funeral monuments; the Signor had even surpassed himself in this last work. But the man whose "broken heart" had bespoken that costly trophy had no eyes or thought for it now, as he gazed lovingly upon the proud beautiful woman who walked by his side.

The dead "find their true graves in our short memories," wrote Sir Thomas Browne over two centuries ago. Perhaps it is well that this should be so; at least the possessors of such "short memories" are spared the pain known to those who make and keep the vow "*Loyale je serais, durant ma vie.*"

The Voice in the Thunder.

By E. LESTER-JONES.

IT was one of those perfect summer evenings in which heaven and earth seem to meet. For a moment we could fancy there were angel voices in our midst. A solemn stillness reigned. The air was heavy with the perfume of flowers and the scent of the newly mown hay. There had been a suspicion of thunder, but the threatened storm was long in coming.

A strange drowsiness came over me, and in an almost miraculous way I was far far from my home and its surroundings, while still the faces I knew were near me, and the voices I loved distinct though distant.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning filled the room with an almost ethereal glow, and at the same moment I found myself in my brother's room at Highgate, where, surrounded by his books and papers he was studying for his final exam.

The lightning was followed by a loud clap of thunder, and as its echoes died away they mingled with a voice familiar and dear.

It was my brother's. I knew it well.

"Come to me, Edmund. You only can save me."

I started: with one hand pushed aside my dishevelled hair—

with the other grasped, in my agitation, the table cover by my side. I glanced around. The room was in wild confusion. My father, disturbed in his nap, was looking for the spectacles he had pushed up on his forehead. My mother dropped her knitting—then sat in speechless amazement. The younger members of the family, half inclined to laugh, finally decided to wait and see how events would shape themselves. I thought at first they must have heard the call. I had yet to learn there are voices only a few may hear, forms only a few may see, and signs understood only by those who have experienced their terrible teaching.

"Good-bye all," I exclaimed. "I will telegraph directly I reach Highgate. If I am very quick I may be in time to save the poor boy."

"Edmund, have you gone mad? Explain yourself. I dislike melodrama," my father broke in.

"I have nothing to explain. Charlie called me and I must go."

"Don't be foolish, my son. Upon my word I thought you had more sense. The thunder has made you fanciful. You were dreaming and the last loud clap awoke you."

"No, father, I was not dreaming. Oh! don't let me delay. What if he should die before I could reach him!" and looking at my watch I exclaimed eagerly, "I have barely time to catch the train."

At this my mother spoke. Years have passed since that night, but I see her now as she stood before me *then*. Tears stood in her tender old eyes: the hand she placed upon my shoulder shook.

"My lad, do not go to-night. Wait until the morning. If you are then persuaded Charlie wants you, nothing shall keep you from him."

"But, mother you believe in God. It is He who called me. I must obey."

My mother looked shocked. Her religion taught her that God must be spoken of with reverence. Then she said gently, as usual, "Poor boy, you are not well, rest quietly here, and the illusion will pass."

I looked at her and as I looked my resolution wavered. Perhaps there was nothing in the call; at any rate, I would wait.

The others returned to their music and cards, glancing at me occasionally as though they half dreaded a repetition of the scene. But they had no need to fear. With the consciousness that it was

now too late to go, my power of will forsook me and I took my seat, feeling I had lost something I should never find again. I heard the music in the distance but it had no power to charm me then. At last I retired, but not to sleep. All night I tossed from side to side, waiting for the morning light. At last it came. But the darkness is never so full of gloom to the weary watcher, as is the first early streak of dawn. No presentiment of trouble so keenly felt, as when the dull stone colour first steals across the horizon.

I jumped from my couch and eagerly began to dress. Then crept noiselessly down the steps, beckoning my dog Roy to follow me. I feared his wail of sorrow at my departure might awake the sleeping household. I hurried on towards the station. I had long to wait, but it did not matter. The time must pass, and do what I would the moments drag.

At last I was in the train. Oh! joy, to think that every moment was bringing me nearer to his side.

Then I prayed—prayed that again I might hear the voice, or at least I might have some token that my brother still lived. But nothing came.

At length Paddington was reached. I jumped into a hansom, saying to the man "Drive on, I'll tell you when to stop."

I put my hand to my head. The name of the street was gone. I waited, and it came back. I told the driver, concluding with "Put on extra speed, I'll pay you!" What mattered the life of a poor beast, when a soul was lying in the balance!

The air was chill and damp. The few yellow leaves which still hung upon the trees in the London parks looked dry and shrivelled. How unlike the country scene I had left behind. Men and women shivered as they hurried to their work. An organ grinder produced "Home Sweet Home" in mournful strains, which struck a chill to my heart. If what I feared had happened, home would be no longer sweet to me. And what of the mother waiting anxiously for tidings of her boy? Would she care to live without her Benjamin? But no, it could not be. I had heard the voice. Was I not coming in answer to its call? Yes, but when? Hours after its beseeching tones had reached me. Arrived at my destination I paid the cabman and rang the bell.

Why is it, in moments of anxiety, every tiny detail is for ever stamped upon the memory? Even now I can see the children

teazing a poor half-starved mongrel, and I remember to this day how I longed to take him home and feed him. I wondered why people would not draw their blinds up evenly, and saw with disquietude that the girl who opened the window and looked down at me, had her hair in curl papers and was altogether slovenly in appearance. There must be something strange about me, for as she looked she gave a loud scream, then mysteriously disappeared. She was so long in returning that I rang, and rang again. My mind was filled with terrible forebodings, and instead of sorrow, anger was now in my heart.

"Why have you kept me so long? I want to see my brother. Where is he?"

She threw up her hands and gesticulated wildly.

"Your brother! Oh! my God, I thought it was Mr. Charlie come back."

There was nothing to be gained from this girl, so throwing ceremony to the winds I pursued my way. Some one was cooking fish; the smell attracted me, and I entered the kitchen. Instinctively I knew it was the landlady.

"Well, sir, it is no use to blame me for what has happened," she began with a poor pretence at bravado. "It is true the doctor said 'Call him at seven or the morphia will do its deadly work,' but I overslept. My God! it was not my fault, I loved the young gentleman as if he was my own son, and I would not have hurt a hair of his head. But he would work and work away at those terrible books. If this is what is coming of sending the young people to the Board Schools, then I'd rather see them dunces."

She had rambled on, trying to hide her feelings, but nature asserted herself at last, and she burst into tears. I wanted to ask her where my brother was, but the words would not come. Instinct guided me to the room, where lay the books and papers I had seen in the vision, but the figure which gave life to the scene was gone. I went up higher, opened another door, and entered. Charlie lay upon the bed apparently asleep. His lips were parted in a smile, a smile of reproach. I touched his brow, it was icy cold.

My God! was he dead, and I his murderer!

I covered my eyes with my hands. I tried to shut out the awful sight, but that look would follow me. Must I see it for ever? And why was I the one to hear the voice? Was I alone guilty?

Poor lad ! To think that he had called, had waited for the brother who had been his life companion, but who had turned a deaf ear to his cry !

"Charlie, dear boy, I am come at last. Am I too late? Oh! come back to me and forgive," I cried in an agony, but no answer came. Still the eyes looked at me with a reproach which held no bitterness in it.

The medical student who had administered the morphia entered. He was a friend of both. I took his hand in silence.

"Edmund, all would have been well, but Mrs. Brown forgot to call him. Poor lad, he had suffered so terribly from this dreadful neuralgia, and he was so anxious to pass his final. I wanted him to sleep, and he begged me so hard. Oh! what shall I do without him?"

"Rawson, you acted for the best. No one can blame you. But what of me? Oh! it is dreadful to have heard the voice, to have seen his beseeching look, and not to have heeded them! My God! my God! is there any agony on earth equal to remorse?" and falling back I sank into a deathlike swoon.

An illness followed from which I was long in recovering, and when bodily strength returned, a cloud hid the terrible scene from my recollection.

At last the cloud was lifted, but the poignancy of my grief was gone, though ever and anon I can still hear the voice which came with the thunder, calling in mournful cadence, "Edmund, come to me, you only can save me!"

St. Valentine's Day.

And does it come and pass unheeded now,
The good Saint's day, before whose magic shrine
The lads and lasses loved of old to bow?—

Is he forgotten now, Saint Valentine ?

Times change and fashions alter ; and no more
When February's fourteenth day is here,
Do laden postmen, as in days of yore,
Bring sealed surprises sent by lover's dear.

O, mingled memories of the vanished past
That cling and cluster round the pensive mind,
As years advancing and receding fast,
Leave scanty relics of this day behind.

Then Cupid reigned a King in peerless pride,
And lavished hearts fantastically blent
With Love's emblazoned emblem far and wide !
And gifts and greetings were by thousands sent ! -

Then amorous swains did choose their sweethearts true,
And pledged the troth that did their lives entwine ;
O sweet the question, old yet ever new,
“ Wilt thou be mine, dear little Valentine ? ”

Now carking cares and nineteenth century ways,
And sordid strife, and selfish greed of gain
Have killed quaint customs of the former days—
Dead is Romance and comes no more again.

Yet still in honour of this slighted day,
The slender tribute of a poet's line,
The lowly offering of this simple lay
Shall meekly lie on Memory's mystic shrine.

For why should longings of the human heart
Languish, and sentiment's fond fancies die ?
And Love's sweet poetry from life depart ?
Why should this be ? And echo answers “ why ? ”

REV. JOHN HUDSON, M.A.

Elfreda :

A TALE OF THE CORNISH SEAS.

By C. HORNBY.

CHAPTER I.

It was a wild dark night, a night when most folks remained indoors.

The wind roared, shrieked and howled, and blew the tall larches round Squire Trewenna's home until they bent their proud heads almost to the earth. Overhead the low inky clouds scurried and chased each other before the blast, at times sweeping the cliffs with their wet misty touch, and mingling with the salt spray that dashed against the rocks below. The tide was up, the breakers reared their angry foaming crests high into the air, then dashed with a loud report like that of distant thunder on to the shingle, splashing and covering the wet black rocks with soapy froth ; then again receding with sullen rebellion to give place to the next, and so on through the night, backwards and forwards, roaring and tumbling in unison with the blast of Heaven's trumpets overhead.

God protect those ships that are driven on shore, for certain death awaits them : those gaunt, black precipitous cliffs show mercy to none, and the dark boiling waters await their victims with yawning hungry jaws.

"Trewenna's Cove" was famed as being the most dangerous bit of coast from Tintagel to Land's End. All who know the Cornish seas, must know it too, for did not six hundred lives come to an untimely end there? In fair weather the Cove offers a goodly shelter for the smuggling craft, as the Trewenna folk know to their cost, for as yet it lay hidden from the eyes of the "Revenue Officers," who are not sharp enough to guess that behind those dark cliffs lies a safe anchorage in fair weather, or that the quiet little village harbours aught but peaceful fishermen, solely intent upon their nets and boats. But in rough weather the Trewenna folk lift up their hearts in prayer as they kneel in the little square-towered, age-blackened church, and say from their hearts, "Good Lord, deliver those upon the deep."

And now the wind roars louder, the gale is at its height, and two terrible things have happened to the Trewenna folks. The Angel of Death has visited Squire Trewenna's home, his baby daughter, his heart's darling has been snatched from him, and his broken-hearted wife lies sick unto death; while the tiny quivering twinkling light far out at sea signals danger and distress, and unless help comes swiftly, the gallant ship struggling so bravely 'midst the waves must soon be dashed to pieces on the rocks. All hold their breath horror-stricken; is the strange craft to be dashed to pieces before their eyes? They are all sons and daughters of the sea, and their kindly hearts ache for their brethren in distress.

Suddenly a voice pierces the darkness, rising above the roar of the wind and the thunder of the waves. It is a voice in which passion and emotion are strangely blended, a young voice that falls like a command from Heaven on the silent watching group. "Will no one —no one help them? Men! can you stand by and see your fellow-creatures perish? Will no one venture and help me launch the boat?"

"I tell you it is impossible, no boat could live in such a sea as this," a hoarse voice shouts in answer, and a low murmur goes from mouth to mouth.

"Cowards, shame on you," cries the mellow young voice again. "Can it be that ye are Cornishmen? Oh! my God, she is on the rocks! If no one will go, I at least will venture." Even as his passionate appeal is borne away by the angry blast, wild cries of despair arise from the doomed vessel. There is a sudden shout, an answering one from the shore, as a dozen sturdy Cornishmen with one accord seize the swaying lifeboat already breasting the surf, and jump into her, headed by their young leader, and amid the cheers of all she is launched, launched among those boiling angry breakers which sweep tumultuously across her deck, and threaten to swamp her again and again. But there are brave hearts aboard, and strong arms and willing hands; who, even as they pull with all their strength, send up a prayer to Heaven that their souls may be saved, and that they may accomplish what they have begun.

"On, on, cheerily, cheerily, lads!" cries their leader, his young face pale as death, his blue eyes flashing with a strange fire. "We shall save them yet, please God;" and then silence reigns, for all their strength is needed as they reach the bar, over which the boiling breakers are thundering.

Will they succeed? Those on shore hold their breath, some of the women cover their faces and sob hysterically.

"Jack, Jack!" cries one—she is but a girl, and her golden hair sweeps round her like a cloud—"Oh! my God, save him, save him!" she moans as she sinks on her knees on the wet sand.

"Now, then for it—steady," shouts the imperious voice, hoarse and faint now, for his strength is all but spent.

A wild whirring noise sounds in the ears of the crew, a huge mass of foam hovers over them for a second, and then with a roar it is upon them, then all is darkness. But again the brave little craft rises, struggling onwards, panting and breathless; two of her crew have been washed overboard, but their life-belts have enabled them to scramble in again. Still they struggle on: the wreck is quite near now, the screams of the drowning souls pierce the night air. One, two, three, are dragged over the taffrail, and a fourth and a fifth. To save the rest is a sheer impossibility, even the brave lad who leads them has to acknowledge that. Suddenly something catches his eye, a tiny object tossing on the heaving waters.

"Row, men, row," he cries with determination. "One more effort; don't leave a child to perish." The words take effect, the brave fellows make one more mighty effort and the child is hauled on board, and once more they turn the boat's head towards the shore.

She is, oh! such a mite, perhaps four years old, with long, wet tangled hair, and a ghastly pale little face. At last the shore is reached, and a dozen ready hands are trying to restore life to the half-dead souls.

"And this little one, where is she to go to?" asks a motherly looking woman, rocking the child in her arms and chafing the icy little hands.

"To the Court, to Squire Trewenna's," says the boy who led the others. "It was for him and his poor lady that I brought her; I say she is to be taken to him."

Some demurred, but no one had any other suggestion to make, so the little shipwrecked waif was taken [to the Court, and the rest dispersed to their different homes.

CHAPTER II.

IT is thirteen years since the Trewenna folk were clustered on the beach to watch the lifeboat on its noble errand of rescue. Some of them who watched are dead, some have gone to foreign shores to seek their fortunes, and others have grown into men and women ; but none can talk of that night without a shudder, or think of it without a sigh.

It is autumn, and the waters of the Cove lie glistening in the afternoon sunshine, a long line of white waves mark where the tide has receded to : below the cliffs the yellow sand lies bare and soft as velvet, the gentle breeze brings a scent of seaweed and wild thyme with it, while the tall larches wave gently to and fro. The old grey-stoned house, nestled beneath the brow of the hill, is Trewenna Court. There seems to be no life anywhere, everything is so still, so peaceful. But what is there to hurry or hasten those quiet west-country people, who live the same prosaic, humdrum life year after year—the harvest alone breaking the monotony of the summer, and Christmas the winter, while wrecks and country fairs follow each other in unvaried succession.

But suddenly the sound of singing breaks the silence, a fresh, pure girlish voice echoes among the trees ; it is so full of happiness that it awakens its hearers suddenly to the pleasure of living.

Elfreda Trewenna comes slowly down the garden path, her hands are full of freshly-cut flowers—she looks almost like a flower herself with her slender, lissom figure, and pure, fair young face : she is not lovely, but she has a pair of deep, clear, gray eyes, straight, clear-cut nose, a firm yet wholly sweet little mouth, and a small head covered with thick glossy curls of chestnut brown hair. No one has ever called her pretty, and she was seventeen to-day, but then, who was there at the Cove to pay compliments. True all the fisher folk loved, nay, worshipped her, and the white-haired vicar would often pat her curly head and say “ God bless you, my child ; ” and Squire Trewenna would have kissed the ground she walked on, but then he had never thought to tell her she was pretty, perhaps he did not know it himself ; and Miss Jane Trewenna, the squire’s sister, who had lived and kept house for him since his wife’s death, would have thought it sinful to talk of “ looks.” In her heart of hearts she loved

Elfreda, but that did not prevent her from greatly disapproving of her also.

"It is dreadful the way the child is allowed to run wild," she would say to herself, for there was no one else to say it to. But it was no good talking, not the least in the world, and Elfreda still ran over the cliffs at her own sweet will, and paddled bare-foot in the pools left by the tide, for there was no one to tell her that she had left childhood behind, and that she must alter her ways and compose her spirits, as befitting her advanced years.

She was seventeen to-day, this day last year she had been sixteen, and this day next year she would be eighteen, but to her it was all the same. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

Soon Elfreda became tired of the garden, so after running indoors to take up her large shady straw hat and clap it on to the top of her wavy hair, she wended her way through the apple orchard, down the little steep sandy lane that led out of it, and on to the broad strand of firm yellow sand.

The tide was still far out, and Elfreda walked on humming a little tune to herself from very lightness of heart. How enjoyable it was, the cool salt breeze ruffled her hair, and a delicate colour crept into her rounded cheeks and deepened and darkened her gray eyes, until they shone like twin stars. But Elfreda walked on all unconscious that she looked beautiful, that her slender figure in the rough serge skirt and red knitted jersey—the sort that the fisher lads wore—made a spot in the landscape that would have delighted a painter's eye. Elfreda did not know this, how was it possible that she should? She was a good walker, and her light footsteps traversed the firm sand quickly, and unheeding how the time sped: when she paused to look round she was startled to see how low the sun was, and that Trewenna Church was lost to sight. She had, unknown to herself, rounded the point, and had roamed five or six miles from home, but she felt warm from walking, and had no inclination to start on her backward journey yet, so she strolled towards the mouth of a large cavern in the side of the cliff, and threw herself down on the soft slippery seaweed. Inside it was cool and refreshing: she had never been there before, although she had explored the numerous cave that abounded in the "Cove."

Elfreda got interested as she went further and further down the narrow vaulted pathway, smaller and smaller narrowed the path but

still she crept on, never looking back or she would have seen the entrance was lost to sight, although there had been no turn in the path. Suddenly darkness confronted her! Elfreda stooped and crawled through the tiny archway. Yes! at last her patience was rewarded, the cavern had opened out into a large square room, with a high vaulted ceiling; room after room Elfreda passed through, and not until total darkness had almost set in did it occur to her that she had lost her way. How to get back without a light, and what was that?

She had run up against something large and hard, a chest studded with iron rings. A chest, yes it could be nothing else; Elfreda remembered having seen a chest with iron rings in old Ben Davis's cottage. Now she had tumbled upon something else, something hard yet not wood or iron. "Sacks," mentally ejaculated Elfreda as she passed her hand over them a second time, and then she knew where she was. It came upon her with a queer little thrill of surprise and terror; she was in the cave, the cave that she had heard Squire Trewenna speak of, the cave where the smugglers kept their goods, the cave many had tried to find, and had never been able to. Elfreda felt her heart beat quickly; supposing the smugglers should find her, what would they do? No thought of fear entered the girl's head, only one of great surprise, tinged with curiosity.

She had heard of smugglers all her life, and had often seen the "Revenue Cutters" pass by the mouth of the "Cove," and had listened breathless to the tales of smugglers' daring, and once she had heard the Squire say something about what a pity it was that young Penlaron had developed into such a wild reckless youth, and had joined them. Penlaron, it was a strange name, yet well known about Trewenna.

Three times Elfreda vainly tried to retrace her steps and find her way out, but each attempt only seemed to carry her further away from where she wanted to go. Once she started up from the sack where she sat with a sudden terror; it seemed as though she heard the splash of water near. Hurriedly she groped her way into the next room, but everything was as silent as the grave; then something else caught her quick ears, and Elfreda felt a hot wave of colour mount to her face. She heard men's voices distinctly; would they kill her, she wondered, if they found she knew their secret.

She put her hand to her throat to prevent a little cry of horror escaping her.

Meanwhile the voices came nearer, and now Elfreda heard footsteps as well.

"About seven this evening," one voice said.

"Very well, don't forget to give the signal."

Should she crouch down behind the chest or remain standing until they came nearer. Surely they would not kill her, she thought a little wildly to herself. Here they come—two tall muscular figures—lighted lanterns in their hands. Elfreda stood motionless her heart thumping to suffocation.

"The devil, and who have we here?" the girl heard a gruff voice exclaim, and then somebody seized her wrists and dragged her forward; but Elfreda would not scream, she only compressed her lips tighter together and glanced fearlessly upwards with her great gray eyes.

"I am Elfreda Trewenna, and I have lost my way," she said in her fearless voice.

For a minute there was an astonished silence; the man who held her wrist let go and started back.

"Miss Trewenna! is it possible? Good heavens, how came you here?" It was another voice that spoke, a voice ripened and mellow with a deep ring in it, and a tall figure strode forward, and held the lantern so that the light fell full on the girl's face.

Derrick Penlaron gazed fixedly at the slim young figure with a startled expression in his deep blue eyes.

"I have lost my way, indeed I did not mean to come here; I swear I will never utter a word as to where I have been." Elfreda threw back her bare curly head as she spoke, for she had left her hat on the top of the wooden chest, and looked first at one and then at the other of the two men, while her gray eyes flashed with mingled defiance and excitement.

"Ye can't go back, 'tis against the law. Penlaron, she must come to Mother Noates," said the other angrily, in a deep gruff voice, "she'll split on us, sure as a gun." He was a great big burly fellow, unkempt, clad in rough serge, with a broad brimmed brigandish looking hat on the top of his thick tangled hair.

"Get out with you, Jervis, what rot are you taking now? Of course Miss Trewenna is to be trusted, I myself will take her

back," answered the young man angrily, his blue eyes still fixed on Elfreda's white young face.

"Ye will swear as ye'll never split, ye'll swear to it on yer sacred oath; if ye do, remember, ye shall suffer for it, we ain't particular ye know."

"Have I not said so, I never break my word," said the girl quietly, fixing her big eyes on the man's face and throwing out one hand as though to emphasize her words; then she turned to Penlaron, "Will you help me to find my way, please? Indeed," with earnest entreaty in her eyes, "you may trust me to keep silence."

"I do trust you with all my heart, Miss Trewenna, but I wish to God that you had never come here."

As they emerged from the cave Elfreda looked at her rescuer curiously. She had heard him called Penlaron. Was this the one whom the Squire had talked of; was it possible he was a smuggler, a breaker of the law? And in truth Derrick Penlaron was good to look at: at sixteen he had been known as Daring Derrick, and was then a tall lad for his age, now he stood over six feet by three inches, proportionately broad, with square massive shoulders. His blue eyes, as deep and dark as his own Cornish seas, were his most striking feature, for the rest he had a strong face with straight, clear cut features, with lips and chin guiltless of hair, and his skin tanned to a golden brown from exposure to all weathers. There was a quick keen expression about his face that came from constant worry and watching, a bold frankness that told of a fearless character, common to those wild careless sons of the sea, who fear neither law nor danger in any form, and he in his turn glanced curiously at the tall slim maiden with the wistful eyes, the same, the very same who had lain in his arms half drowned, nearly thirteen years ago, and now she was Miss Trewenna, a lady bred if not born, but how did he know that she was not a nobleman's daughter, how could anyone know? And he, what was he? A wild lawless fellow, whom people talked of with grave faces, hunted by man as a wild beast, accused of drunkenness, his character stained with suspicion of dark crimes by ready tongues; then somehow it came upon him that he would rather that these stories did not come to the ears of the girl beside him. Would her great trustful eyes still look at him with the same confidence? He doubted it.

And now the Cove was reached, and Penlaron slackened his speed.

"The Court is close by, you cannot mistake your way now. I must come no farther." Elfreda held out her hand, a cool slender nut brown hand, and stood silently looking up at him.

"I thank you very much for what you have done," she said gently. "I shall never utter a word about this night, believe me."

"I do believe you, I wish there was no cause for such secrecy, and—and farewell Miss Trewenna, remember that all of us are not so bad as we are painted."

With that he was gone, while Elfreda stood with outstretched hand, which he had never taken, then turned and rather sadly made her way home.

CHAPTER III.

OF course Elfreda was scolded by Miss Trewenna for her prolonged absence, but not a word passed the girl's lips as to where she had been, in spite of the old lady's repeated and angry questions.

Summer was gone at last, and winter, cruel, cold winter came, bringing with it gales, storms and wrecks. The Trewenna folk shook their heads, and said it was going to be a bad winter for man and beast.

Life at the Court went on as it had always done; the wind groaned and shrieked around it, rattling the ivy on its walls, and shaking the rotten old chimneys and loose tiles on the roof, until Elfreda was obliged to cover her ears with her hands, as she lay on her narrow bedstead and listened to the roar of the breakers as they broke on the shore. But Elfreda was not as bright as usual, and she would jump at the sound of a door banging, and shudder if the wind howled more than usual, and once when guns were heard firing far out to sea, she turned very white, and crept from the room where Miss Trewenna was working.

She never walked on the sands now, but traced her footsteps far inland, away from the roar of the surf. It was now that something happened to Elfreda, something which she never forgot all her life long.

It was the 18th of November, and the tree tops and bold headlands were lost in a cold white mist that swept in from the sea. The wind had fallen, and the bay was singularly calm, but the water looked grey and sullen, and the breakers roared louder than usual.

Inside the Court everything looked warm and comfortable, the Squire was busy with his magisterial work, and Miss Trewenna sat knitting beside the dining-room fire. Elfreda was out! When the Squire heard of it, he jumped up hastily. "Out—out of doors in such a mist, the tide rapidly coming in and the wind rising. Good heavens, the child must be mad." Already the church clock had struck the hour of nine, and outside was pitch blackness.

Soon all the village knew that Elfreda was missing, and lanterns were seen flitting here and there upon the downs, but when Derrick Penlaron heard of it his bronzed cheek grew pale, and his blue eyes flashed, as, buckling on his oilskins and catching up a dark lantern, he hurried forth: he of all those anxious seekers guessed where the squire's darling was, yet he kept silence and spoke to no one as he hurried on. He knew that Ben Davis, Peter Gourney and the rest of them would be in a fine way when they missed him, for an attack had been planned for that very night, on the Revenue Cutter that had been hovering round all the week. But Derrick cared little what they thought, and he clenched his teeth hard as he bounded down the rocky pathway and took the narrow cliff track.

He might be wrong after all, Elfreda might not be there, she might have climbed the "Devil's Rock" instead; more than once he had seen her there, but still he kept on trusting to luck, as was his custom.

He could hear the surf as it beat on the rocks below, and more than once he looked anxiously seaward, but no light marked where either the smuggling craft or the Cutter lay.

At last the pathway came abruptly to an end, but without stopping Derrick climbed down over the huge slippery black rocks until he gained the ledge he sought.

It was a broad shelf of smooth rock, completely hidden and sheltered from the beach below by a large projecting boulder, but it commanded a perfect and uninterrupted view of the sea, and the ragged line of coast could be seen for miles round. It was here that Penlaron had seen Elfreda come day after day; he had watched her nimble figure through his telescope from the deck of the "Speedy." But there was no red woollen cap and curly head to tell him that Elfreda sat behind the big rock on his left, although he held the lantern high, and called her once softly by her name, the red colour mounting to his tanned skin as he did so, pitch dark though it was.

Then his heart almost stopped beating, and his tall figure swayed as far, far down below, borne upwards with the salt spray, came a sound, a faint pitiful cry. Twice the young man heard it, then all was silent.

"My God! she has fallen;" the words forced themselves through his dry lips. To think was to do, and almost before he had realized where he was he had scrambled back, and stood on the beach below, while the soapy foam of the waves curled at his feet.

Throwing away the lantern which he could no longer hold, Derrick began his perilous journey over the glistening dark brown rocks, while the roaring surf swept round his ankles, sometimes soaking him in spray as it dashed against the cliff.

"Elfreda, Elfreda!" rung out his strong mellow voice. "Elfreda, are you there?"

A wild despairing cry answered him.

"Where, where?" called Derrick, as with tightly closed lips he pressed onwards, while the water streamed from his soaking oil-skins and ran down his face in torrents. Then he found her! A cold trembling little hand was stretched out to him from the darkness, and this time he took it and held it tightly.

"I am so glad you have come, oh, so glad," said Elfreda, her calmness nearly giving way, as she rose from the hard rock on which she had taken refuge to escape the soaking spray. "I am not hurt fortunately, although I must have fallen a great way," she said. "But—oh, let us get back quickly."

Her voice broke off trembling, and Derrick felt a cold sweat break over him as he heard it, for how were they to get back? How could he take her from where he had just come, she would be dashed to pieces. He had narrowly escaped as it was; he who had all his life been used to battling against all weathers, and risking his life on the rocky heights. Yet if they remained where they were they would be drowned where they stood, dashed to pieces by the cruel, greedy waves. Strong man as he was, his lips quivered, and the tears rushed to his eyes. He had saved her once, long, long ago, when they were both children, and now must he tell her to prepare for death; would the surging, heaving waters claim her after all these years?

"I cannot take you back—it is impossible." He spoke by a mere effort of will.

"What! we must stay here, stay here and die?" Elfreda cried. She had forgotten to be brave, poor child, and the scalding tears rolled down her pale cheeks and choked her. "Oh! surely, surely God will not let us die yet!" The anguish of her young voice drove Derrick nearly mad.

"We shall be saved, we must; they will find us. But Miss Trewenna—Elfreda—will you stay here, will you promise not to stir, and I will go back and bring help; I shall not be long, I——" His sentence was never finished; just then a huge, foaming wave reared its crest high above the rock, and then with a roar of thunder descended upon them. Derrick seized Elfreda in his arms, while she with one low piercing cry buried her face on his breast. For one minute Derrick thought it was all over, that the end, the terrible end had come; but the wave had but soaked them through and through.

Half smothered the young man drew a long breath: for the time they were saved, and Elfreda shaking like an aspen leaf, but strangely calm, withdrew herself from his arms, and stood there, her young face ghastly white, her eyes dark and brilliant, waiting—waiting for death, for the next wave must dash them to pieces, or wash them away with it. Not a word was uttered, only the deafening thunder rang in their ears, and the night wind moaned a little.

"It is coming! Darling let me hold you," said Derrick in a voice strange and hollow, and then Elfreda looked up suddenly, just as a vivid flash lighted up all around, and for one brief second those two young creatures looked into each other's eyes. Derrick's blue ones shone with a strange light as he looked down with a wild yearning into the great sad trustful grey ones.

"Elfreda, Elfreda," he murmured hoarsely.

"Derrick, Derrick," came the answer, and then clasped together they waited while the huge wave came rolling onwards. A loud report, a sudden frightful whirring noise like that of a hundred engines—it had reached them, and then neither remembered any more.

CHAPTER IV.

ELFREDA sat back in the arm-chair that was brought up close to the Squire's writing table. She looked pale, and there were dark shadows beneath her eyes. She had not yet got over the frightful shock she had received, and at night she still fancied the cruel waves were strangling her, and she would wake gasping for breath. How she had been mercifully rescued, she hardly knew, only a hazy recollection of being roughly seized by someone, and the sound of cries and men's hoarse voices remained to her, and then when she had opened her eyes she had been lying safely in her own little white bed at home, while Miss Trewenna, her hard old face changed and anxious, bent over her, and put brandy to her lips. Now it was all over, but Elfreda grew paler and paler as the days went on, and more restless. Derrick Penlaron's face was continually rising before her. Where was he? Had he been saved too? Why did no one mention his name?

But at last she heard of him. The Squire sat in his carved oak chair, the morning paper in his hands and the gold rimmed eye-glasses on his nose. Miss Trewenna sat working as usual, and Elfreda lay back in her chair, idle and listless.

"Dear, dear, I am very sorry to see this," began the Squire, a frown wrinkling up his forehead. "My dear, shall I read this aloud? Really these smugglers are passing all bounds."

Elfreda felt the hot blood rush to her cheek and her heart gave a suffocating little thump. The Squire cleared his throat and read.

"Fight between the crew of the Revenue Cutter 'Flying Fish' and the smugglers."

"Last Tuesday night, about nine o'clock, a sharp struggle ensued between the crew of H.M.S. 'Flying Fish' and the smuggling craft 'Speedy,' at the mouth of Trewenna's Cove, just off the 'Danger Rock.' The sea was comparatively smooth, although the surf was running high in-shore. Lieutenant Colwell ordered the Cutter to lay off the 'Rock,' and all hands were on the look-out for the 'Speedy,' which was supposed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood. About 9.30, much to the surprise of Lieutenant Colwell, a dark looking craft was seen bearing right down upon them from the opposite direction to the Cove, and in less than ten minutes had run alongside.

"A whole gang of masked and well armed men boarded and cut down all who came in their way, without as much as a word. The crew of the Cutter very soon put them to the right about, and drove them steadily back towards their own vessel. Unfortunately Lieutenant Colwell was killed and several of the seamen badly wounded; three of the smugglers were killed, and five captured, but the one who so brutally killed Lieutenant Colwell escaped. It is very well known that he was none other than the renowned and most daring hand among them, namely Derrick Penlaron, who was easily identified by his enormous height and great strength. The prisoners will be brought up before his Lordship Judge Wyatt, at the next county assizes. It is thought by most that Penlaron will only get his desserts if the sentence is hanging.

"We are glad to inform our readers by special telegram that the notorious smuggler was captured last night, not far from his own home near Trewenna."

The Squire put down the paper and Miss Trewenna muttered "Dear, dear" in a shocked tone. Elfreda said nothing, she only lay back further in her chair, her young face white as death, her eyes closed. She had not fainted, but it seemed as if something had suddenly snapped in her heart; the room heaved and swam before her eyes, a strange singing sounded in her ears. Miss Trewenna's voice brought her back to herself.

"Good heavens, the child has fainted," cried the old lady, but Elfreda shook her head slightly and tottered to her feet.

"No, no, I am all right. I only felt a little faint for a minute. I think I will go upstairs for a time." She groped her way like a blind person towards the door, and was gone.

However she got upstairs Elfreda never knew, but she was conscious of a sense of relief in throwing herself on her bed, and lying there with her hands over her face. Was she going mad, she wondered, why was she lying on her bed? The girl rose and pressed her hand to her eyes, she must be calm, she must collect her thoughts somehow.

Tuesday, last Tuesday night, where was she? She remembered now; should she ever forget; and he had been with her then, had held her in his arms; had—had—oh, Elfreda did not quite know what had happened. Why did her tiresome hands tremble so, and her limbs shake under her? Would the mist never clear away; was

she going blind, or what? Then suddenly her brain cleared, she saw Penlaron's figure before her distinctly, his tall strong figure and frank handsome face, his blue eyes were looking at her, his bright beautiful blue eyes, asking her to help him, save him if needs be. It was then that Elfreda formed her plans. She was quite herself now, although the old joyous light had gone out of her face, and instead there was a look of quiet determination, a look that quite scared Miss Trewenna and made her wonder if the girl were quite right.

The Squire was astonished when Elfreda said to him the next day she wished to be driven into R—— on the day of the prisoner's trial. Somehow the Squire dared not say nay to this white faced maiden, with the great wide sorrowful eyes, and so, on Thursday morning, Elfreda robed herself in a neat gray cloth dress which she generally wore on Sundays, tied a thick veil over her gray felt hat and bright chesnut curls, and took her place beside the Squire in the high two-wheeled trap, and they drove off. Not once did Elfreda open her lips, only as they entered the quaint old-fashioned market town and drew up before the "Court House," her mouth quivered, and she clenched her hands tightly together so that the nails ran into her soft flesh.

The Court was full, crowded even, for it was seldom indeed that smugglers were captured, especially such a well-known one as Derrick Penlaron.

Elfreda would not sit down or rest anywhere; she stood like a living statue beside the doorway, and fixed her eyes immoveably on the prisoner's dock.

The three smugglers were tried and each sentenced to imprisonment, but Elfreda hardly heard the sentence. Then suddenly the people all became a black heaving mass before her as Derrick Penlaron entered the dock.

The crowded court showed signs of a suppressed excitement, there were a good many claps and a few hisses, but order was called for angrily and the case proceeded.

There he stood, alone and almost undefended, his head held high in a sort of proud defiance, his blue eyes flashing fire, his face deadly pale, but rigid and motionless.

All at once he seemed to start, and clutch hold of the iron railing; for a minute his keen eye dropped and a deep slow burning colour mounted to his forehead; when he looked up again, all were astonished

at the fixed hardness of his expression. One after another the witnesses were called, but none of them had much to say except that Derrick Penlaron had not been with them on the evening of the fight, but none could say or even guess where he had been.

Elfreda had asked her father to write on his card and send it to the clerk sitting below the judge: "My daughter, Miss Trewenna, is anxious to give evidence, as she knows where the prisoner was on the night of the 10th, when a boatman of the name of Frewen rescued her and another person from beneath the rocks near Trewenna Cove."

On the summons of the judge she entered the witness-box, pale and trembling from excitement.

The prosecuting counsel asked her what she knew of the prisoner's movements on the night in question, and why she appeared.

Elfreda answered that she had been very ill since the 10th, and had not heard of the encounter on board the Revenue Cutter, until her father that morning had read aloud from a newspaper that the trial of the smugglers would take place that day. She then detailed facts already given, her fall and the peril she was in, and the accidental and providential arrival of Derrick.

She was somewhat roughly cross-examined by the prosecuting counsel, who asked her if she was in any way connected with the prisoner, or in short if any love passage had passed between them, and if she was clandestinely engaged to him. Elfreda replied quietly that she only felt grateful to him for the attempt he had made to save her, and as she knew where he had been on the evening in question, and therefore could not have been on board the smuggling craft, she had insisted upon telling what she knew. Her father corroborated her account of her rescue by "Frewen," but did not know of Derrick's part in it, or that he had been with her, her illness having prevented all inquiry, as the doctor insisted that while so weak, she should not be taxed with any of the incidents painful to her memory.

Bill Frewen was then called, and said he was in his boat, had heard the cries, and went to the rescue. He gave a clear and concise account of what had happened, and said that he himself had helped to carry Miss Trewenna from the rocks up to the Court, but it had been too dark to recognise the other person who had been with her. He had only seen that he was very tall, and had not

appeared much the worse for his wetting, since he had disappeared soon after Miss Trewenna had been carried into the house.

This was all that Bill Frewen knew. After the Judge had summed up, the jury adjourned to consider their verdict.

All the time that Elfreda had been in the box, Derrick had stood like one turned to stone, his blue eyes fixed immoveably on her face, but now that her work was done, Elfreda seemed suddenly to lose all control over herself; at the door the Squire met her, and sobbing, the girl, regardless of spectators, threw herself into his arms and cried as though her heart would break.

"My brave darling, my poor child, dear little Freda," murmured the Squire tenderly, as he led her into the waiting-room.

"Don't stay; go, go and hear what the verdict is," she cried half hysterically, and the Squire hurried away. But Elfreda could not bear the suspense of waiting; brushing away her tears, she flew after him, just as the foreman of the jury pronounced in a loud voice the verdict "not guilty."

CHAPTER V.

AND now it was that the Squire thought it time that Elfreda should know the history of how she came to Trewenna Cove. The old man had a subtle feeling that things were changing, and that Elfreda was drifting away from him and his. And so Elfreda was sent for to the study. The Squire stood by the window when she entered the room, and Derrick Penlaron stood with his back to the mantleshef, his strong brown hand playing nervously with the china figures thereon. Elfreda started when she perceived him, and a light came into her gray eyes. Then the Squire came towards her, and his hand trembled strangely as it sought hers, and his keen hazel eyes glittered suspiciously. He told her in as few words as he could command, for his voice was husky and trembled. Elfreda never uttered a word, but as the Squire stopped speaking the tears rose thickly in her eyes, and with a little cry she threw her arms around his neck.

"But I love you, I shall always love you just the same, although I—I am not your daughter."

The tears gathered in the old man's eyes too. Derrick coughed and turned away his head and stared at a picture on the wall.

"You are my daughter, and always will be, nothing can change that," said the Squire hurriedly.

"But my name, my name is not Trewenna at all, what is it?" cried Elfreda piteously.

The Squire shook his head. "I cannot tell you, my child," he said.

"Then I have no name, I am nobody—nobody!"

Derrick Penlaron strode forward and caught both her trembling hands in his. "Not while I live. Elfreda, Elfreda, listen to me! It was I who saved you from the wreck and brought you safe to shore, Elfreda, won't you let me give you my name. Will you marry me?"

She turned bewildered from one to the other, "I love you with all my heart, with all my soul and strength," he continued rapidly. "I saved your life and you saved mine by your brave-hearted fearlessness. Elfreda won't you come to me?"

She gazed on him as he stood there, a splendid figure truly, his dark head erect, his blue eyes gazing at her, filled with a passionate and pleading look.

"Go to him, child; he is worthy of you, and will make you happy," said the Squire huskily, as he winked back the tears from his kind old eyes. But Elfreda hesitated for a moment, and then threw her loving young arms around the old man's neck.

"Father, father—you will remain my father always just the same—you will never love anyone better than your little Freda?" She clung to him silently, but the Squire released her gently.

"Give him your answer, dearie," he said steadily. And then Elfreda turned to her lover, a soft flitting colour in her cheeks, her gray eyes misty with tears.

"Dear, dear Derrick," she said simply, putting her slender little hands on his shoulders and looking frankly up at him, and in the excessiveness of his joy the young man bent and kissed her, his eyes glowing with as much passion and earnestness as when he called upon the throng of watching men to help him launch the life-boat nearly fourteen years ago.

* * * *

But all this happened years ago, in the days when the Cornish sea harboured many a strange craft. And Elfreda lives at "Postle-waithy" now, and whoever she was, whoever her parents were, it makes but little difference, as her husband often tells her, for she is for ever and aye "until death us do part," Mrs. Derrick Penlaron.

Early Days of Mozart.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD,

Author of "HAYDN," "MYSTERY OF CASTLE CROME," etc., etc.

"NANNEREL has a wonderful talent for music—I mean to give her regular instruction and begin this very day."

Thus spake Leopold Mozart one bright cold day in January, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-eight. He was chapel master at Salzburg, and an excellent teacher, being well up in the theory and composition of music. He was a stern, reliable man; devoted to his art, but parsimonious to a degree, and he ruled his family with a rod of iron.

Anna Maria (playfully called Nannerel) came timidly towards the old harpsichord, proud of the dignity of taking lessons, but rather afraid of her stern father. Little did the Mozart family imagine what a memorable day this would prove in their history.

Playing about the room was a toddling child of two years old, afterwards the famous Mozart. As soon as the first sounds of music floated through the room, he left off playing with his toy, and listened attentively: no sooner had his sister left the instrument, than he toddled up to it and tried to reproduce the sounds with his chubby little fingers.

His father—wise and far-seeing—was much struck with this little incident, and determined to devote himself to the musical education of this wonderful child. From that day little Wolfgang Mozart was never happy unless when trying to reproduce musical sounds. His playthings were discarded, except those associated with music, but he would march and sing with his playfellows in high glee. At four years old his father gave him regular instruction, and at the age of five he composed little pieces, which Leopold wrote down for him.

The child had no taste for any study but music—if we except arithmetic. He could do quite difficult sums in his head at an early age. Fond however as Wolfgang was of figures in the abstract, he never had the least idea of the true value of money. His father's penurious ways early disgusted him, and in the reaction, he betrayed

a horror of the management of money, and eventually became a careless spendthrift.

One day Wolfgang was very busy over a paper in which there were some strange-looking scrawls. "What are you doing, my little boy?" asked his father.

"I am writing a concerto, papa," the child promptly replied, "I have nearly finished it." Leopold took the paper from the little boy's hand, and at first could make nothing of it. Gradually, however, the meaning dawned upon him, and his heart throbbed with joy and pride.

"Look here!" cried he to a friend standing by, "this is all composed according to the correct rules of art, but is almost too difficult to play."

"I tell you it is a concerto," exclaimed the child reddening, "and it must be practised until it can be played; I will show you a little about it," and going to the piano he tried to bring out his harmony. Of course with his tiny hands, he was unable to do this, but there came such a flood of melody, that his father was lost in wonder and admiration.

Not only did Leopold Mozart—looking into the future—see the reflected glory that would fall upon him as the father of such a genius, but no doubt he thought of the gain that would follow. From that time he resolved to give the boy a wider scope than Salzburg could offer. Accordingly, in the spring of 1762 the whole Mozart family went to Munich, and the two children performed before the Elector of Bavaria with great applause. In September of that year Leopold took his gifted children on another tour: this time they went to Vienna, and played before the Court. The Emperor Francis I. of Austria took great notice of them, and gave Wolfgang a fancy dress which had been prepared for the little Archduke Maximilian.

One day the Emperor said to the child, "It is not perhaps so very difficult to play with all one's fingers, but to play with one finger without seeing the keys would indeed be wonderful."

Without the least appearance of surprise Wolfgang turned to the harpsichord, and with only one finger played many difficult passages. He then covered the instrument and played blindfold, and performed so wonderfully that all around thought he must have been in the habit of playing in that manner.

The child soon became the darling of the young Archduchesses, daughters of the Empress. One day, two of them, by way of a treat, took little Wolfgang over the palace and showed him all its grandeur and beauty, but the poor little fellow, quite unused to the polished floors, fell flat down on the corridor. One of the young princesses was too haughty to take any notice of this mishap, but the younger caressingly raised him up and made much of him.

The child looking earnestly into her face, said "Thank you, you are so kind, I should like to marry you." The girl laughed carelessly, and swept lightly over the polished floor, little thinking what lay before her in the future, for this girl was the beautiful and ill-fated Marie Antoinette.

One can fancy that a shadow ever watched beside her, but alas! there was none to warn her of her doom.

During Wolfgang's stay at Vienna he bought himself a small violin, and on his return to Salzburg he soon learned to play it. One day, Wenzl, a clever violinist, came to Leopold Mozart, bringing with him six trios which he had composed during his friend's absence, and asked him to try them. Mozart was to take the bass, Wenzl the first, and Schactner the second violin. We will record this anecdote in Schactner's own words:

"Little Wolfgang," he says, "asked permission to take the second violin, which I had offered to play. His father rather sharply replied that as he had never received any regular lessons on the violin, he could not possibly play. The little boy to this rather sullenly answered that 'no lessons were needed to take a second violin.' Then Mozart peremptorily told the little boy to go away, and as Wolfgang took up his violin I saw that he was weeping bitterly. His tears moved me, for I loved the child dearly, and I begged permission for him to play. To this Leopold at last consented, only saying sternly to the child, 'Wolfgang, you may play with Mr. Schactner on condition that you play very softly and do not let yourself be heard.' We began the trio, little Wolfgang playing with me, and I soon found with the greatest astonishment that I was perfectly useless. Without saying anything I laid down my violin and looked at his father, who shed tears of delight."

It is not surprising after this that Schactner became exceedingly fond of the boy, and occasionally lent him his own beautiful violin to practise on. One day he found Wolfgang playing on his own

violin, but the instant he saw his friend, the little boy cried out, "I love your violin best, I can draw such soft tones from it, but please let me have it tuned just as it was when I had it first. Yours is half of a quarter below mine. On hearing this, Schactner sent for his violin, and found it was precisely at the pitch the child had indicated.

This extreme musical sensitiveness was often a pain to Wolfgang : the least discordant note became an agony and until he was ten year old the very sound of a trumpet terrified him. His father—always a stern man—in the endeavour to break him of this fear had a trumpet blown suddenly before the child. At the very first blast, he turned deadly pale, and fell flat on the floor ; convulsions would most probably have followed had they not immediately ceased playing. In truth, the delicate boy was too sensitive in feeling, for health, strength or happiness.

His playing had now become so exquisite, from his genius and the polish of constant practice and study, that his father thought it was time that he should be more widely known to the world, and at Paris he expected to gather a rich harvest. Accordingly the whole Mozart family started on their tour, travelling cheaply and leisurely visiting many places of note on their way. They reached Paris in November, 1763, and remained there five months. Among the many letters of introduction the Mozart family brought with them, was one to Herr Grimm, the secretary of the Duke of Orleans. He was exceedingly kind and courteous, and as a guide in their brilliant Paris life, proved invaluable. In a letter to a friend Grimm gives a description of them which we will quote in his own words.

"We have a *Kapellmeister* here," he says, "from Salzburg, named Mozart. He has two charming children. The elder of the two, a girl of eleven, plays the piano in a very brilliant manner, executing the most difficult pieces with perfect time and precision. The younger, a boy scarcely seven, is so extraordinary a genius one can hardly believe one's own eyes and ears as witnesses to his performances. He not only plays the most intricate and difficult music with little hands that can barely stretch a sixth, but he extemporizes, often for hours together, with a continuous flow of harmonious and beautiful ideas. He writes and composes with amazing fluency without approaching the instrument at all. The most learned musician could not with technical knowledge exceed his intuitions on modulation and harmony. I gave him a minuet, and asked him to set a bass to

it. He seized a pen and did so without even looking at the piano : of course it costs him nothing to transpose any air into any key which may be desired. But the following performance I myself witnessed, or I could scarcely have believed it : A lady asked him to accompany her in an Italian Cavatina ; she sang without her notes, giving him no music. The child's fingers wandered over the basses as she sang, and as soon as she had ceased he begged her to re-commence the air, and then played a beautiful and complete accompaniment.

"He begged her to sing again and again the same air, and each time varied entirely the character of his accompaniment. This was repeated ten times.

"I can scarcely see how such wonderful genius can be preserved, and the child's head not be completely turned by the admiration he must always excite."

Certainly Herr Grimm was very kind to the Mozart family and helped to make their visit to Paris a great success. They gave concerts, and were received into the first society by the Court and the whole of the Royal Family ; even Madame de Pompadour fêted them, and the Queen encouraged little Wolfgang to prattle to her in German, which mightily amused the old blasé Louis the Fifteenth. So accustomed was the little fellow to be caressed, that he one day boldly asked Madame de Pompadour why she had not kissed him : "The Queen kisses me," he naïvely said.

Nothing was to be heard at this time but praises of these wonderful children, and Leopold, with the acuteness and business-like talent which ever distinguished him, thought he might now venture to publish a few of his little son's works. He accordingly brought out four sonatas, two of which were dedicated to the Princess Victoire, second daughter of Louis the Fifteenth.

After this glorious winter at Paris, during which however, nothing was allowed to interfere with the children's regular practising, so as to impart the greatest polish to their musical gifts, Leopold thought he might venture on a season in London, the land—as he called it—"of guineas and old music."

The reception of the Mozart family in London was quite as gratifying as it had been in Paris. The children performed before George the Third and Queen Charlotte, who were both good judges of music, and their appreciative interest roused little Mozart to the

highest pitch of enthusiasm. The memory of Handel too, who had only recently died, lingered in the boy's mind, and he used to gaze thoughtfully and earnestly at the monument, placed between Newton and Shakespere, in the glorious old Westminster Abbey.

When only eight years old he played some difficult and abstruse music simply from sight, when it was placed before him, even fugues of Handel and Bach. At this tender age he seems to have had the musical power of a man, and his father averred that he knew all that was necessary for a professor of forty.

One day he performed before the king something more difficult than anything he had ever before attempted. He was playing in one of the rooms of the palace, where there happened to be a bass of Handel lying on the piano. He took it up, and from the simple figured chords drew the most exquisite melody.

There is an interesting notice of Mozart, in a volume of "Philosophical Transactions," bearing date 1770, written by Barrington, who speaks of the boy as a "musical psychological wonder." Especially did he marvel at seeing the child play, from score, a piece written for two violins and a bass: Mozart gave the idea of this concerted music on the piano, making the leading theme perfectly clear. He also began to sing about this time, in a sweet childish voice, but with exquisite purity of tone.

The success and genius of the boy were so extraordinary, that envy tried to throw its dark shadow over his fame. Questions began to be raised about the child's age. Some people stoutly declared that he must be at least fourteen or fifteen years old, as they could not believe in such precocious genius. The dispute became so warm that at length Count Haslang, the Bavarian Ambassador, sent to Salzburg for a copy of the child's baptismal register, and thus the question was laid to rest.

During his residence in London Mozart wrote six sonatas, which he dedicated to Queen Charlotte. In July, 1765, the Mozart family left England, delighted with their success and the reception they had met with. They went to Calais, and passing through Flanders arrived at the Hague, by invitation of the Princess of Nassau-Weilburg. Here the children fell seriously ill, but the Princess lavished the utmost care and attention upon them, and after Mozart's recovery he wrote six sonatas, which he gracefully dedicated to his benefactress.

The Mozarts then went for a month to Amsterdam, but returned to the Hague to be present at the installation of the Prince of Orange, brother to their friend, the Princess of Nassau. Mozart composed a grand piece for this fête in which all the instruments of the orchestra played together, and then each in turn played variations on the same air. After this fête was over the Mozarts paid a flying visit to Amsterdam, and gave two concerts during Lent, because, as the people declared, "the wonderful gifts of the children showed forth the praises of God."

In the spring of 1766 the Mozart family returned to Paris for a time, where their friend Herr Grimm was still staying. He speaks at length of these precocious children, and I will quote his own words: "We have again here the two charming children of the Kapellmeister of the Archbishop of Salzburg, who delighted us all two years ago. They have been eighteen months in England and six in Holland, and are now on their way home. Wherever they have travelled there has been but one voice in their praise. Mdlle. Mozart, now fourteen years old, is very pleasing in manners and appearance; plays the piano beautifully and with great taste and expression. It is only the amazing gifts of her brother that make hers less noticed. He is now nine years old; and has scarcely grown at all since he was here, except in his art, in which he has made great strides. Many esteemed musicians and kapellmeisters die, without knowing what this child of nine does, of harmony. One might descant for hours on this extraordinary phenomenon. He is also one of the most lovable beings possible; everything he says and does is so full of spirit and sentiment, united with the simplicity of his age. The only fear he can excite is, that fruit so early ripe should be plucked before its time. If this child should live, Salzburg would never hold him, the sovereigns of Europe would dispute for him. His father is not only an artist, but a man of great sense, more than I have ever seen in a person of his position."

After the Mozarts left Paris they went to Switzerland and made the acquaintance of Solomon Gessner, who gave Wolfgang a copy of his works with this inscription:—"To the Pride of Germany and the Wonder of the World."

At Munich, on their way home, the Elector gave Mozart a musical theme, telling him to develop it and write it down at once in his presence, without any aid from violin or harpsichord; this he did easily,

to the profound astonishment of the Elector and the whole Court. Soon after this the Mozart family returned to Salzburg after an absence of three years. Here they were received with enthusiasm. When they went away they were of no importance and their musical gifts slighted. Now that the world had set its seal of approbation upon the children's amazing gifts, and they had become famous and needed no help, hands were stretched out and lavish praises met them on all sides.

The Mozarts, however, were too shrewd to be deceived, and they merely used Salzburg as a place to refit and rest in, before beginning as it were, another campaign. Wolfgang had leisure now to study the works of the great masters, and this time of study and practice enriched his whole life and compositions; the calm, regular living improved his health and benefited him in every way. At length Leopold thought it was time to win fresh laurels, so he took his children to Vienna where they were received with the utmost kindness and enthusiasm, by Joseph II, and the whole of his Court. This aroused a feeling of jealousy in some of the veteran musicians at Vienna, and a report was spread that Wolfgang did not write all the compositions ascribed to him. To set this question at rest for ever, Leopold Mozart caused a large party to assemble at the rooms of the great master, Metastasio, and challenged any one of the party to open Metastasio's works and give his son a subject for music. This was done, and Wolfgang sat down and immediately wrote a song and its accompaniment, exquisitely suited to the words given to him. Afterwards Leopold invited anyone to give him an air, requiring the boy to write at once parts for all the instruments, so as to make a concerted piece; this also the child did with splendid success.

The crowning glory, however, of Mozart's stay in Vienna was when the church of an orphanage had to be consecrated, and solemn music was required; this Wolfgang was invited to produce. A mass, a motet and a trumpet duet were needed, and the composer was to conduct the orchestra in person. This was a glorious opportunity indeed, to vindicate his genius. Crowds gathered to hear the performance, and the Emperor and the whole of his court were present. It was truly a strange sight. All the glitter of the great assemblage on the one hand, and on the other a slight boy of twelve at the head of a great orchestra, the music of which he had himself composed.

This reminds one instinctively of a scene in Prince Lobkowitz's Palace, many years after, when the great and good Haydn—then fast nearing the Eternal shore—was carried in to hear his own grand work, "The Creation," with an orchestra of a hundred and sixty performers, and an audience composed of the flower of the nobility of Vienna. Haydn, however, was at the close of a long and well-spent life, and Mozart just standing on the threshold, with a splendid career opening before him. The performance proved a grand and complete success, and a perfect triumph over his enemies. The Empress, on this occasion, gave Wolfgang a magnificent present, and the Emperor congratulated him warmly.

Soon after this the Mozart family left Vienna, and returned to Salzburg to study counterpoint and the Italian language, as a visit to Italy was in contemplation. During this stay at Salzburg, Wolfgang was made director of the chapel of the Archbishop of Salzburg, everyone in his native place being anxious now to do him honour.

After remaining a year at Salzburg, Mozart, accompanied by his father, and—for the first time—leaving his mother and sister at home, went to Milan, where he was engaged to write the music for an opera to be performed at the carnival of 1771. After a series of presents, fêtes, and concerts, which made Mozart's journey through Italy one long ovation, they went to Bologna. At Bologna, Wolfgang made the acquaintance of Padre Martini—Jomelli's Master—a musical oracle, and the greatest counterpoint of his age. It was amazing to see this boy of twelve—small for his age—developing the subjects of fugues Martini gave him, and executing them perfectly on the pianoforte. Martini was delighted with the boy, and some months after made him a member of the Philharmonic Academy of Bologna. Here, also, Mozart made the acquaintance of Farnelli, a remarkable man. As physician and singer he had cured the malady of Philip the Fifth of Spain. As prime minister of the country, he used his power wisely and well, and when Court favour declined, he resigned his office with dignity, and retired to a lovely villa at Bologna, and spent the rest of his days in peace.

The friendship between Farnelli and the boy was very warm and deep, and it was touching to see Mozart in the dawn of his glory, admiring and leaning upon one who had safely passed through the storms of life, and was calmly resting in the sunset of his days.

The approach of Holy Week at Rome, drew Wolfgang away from Bologna in 1770. Of course the music of Passion Week, at the Sistine Chapel, was his great object.

At that time the Pope's musicians were forbidden under pain of excommunication, to give copies of the "Miserere" then performed. Mozart, knowing this, and being struck by the sublime performance, determined to commit it to memory. This feat the boy actually accomplished, hiding the MS. in his hat. Leopold tried to hush the matter up, but Wolfgang not being equally careful, the affair leaked out. The people in Rome would not believe the story, and at a public concert he was asked to sing the "Miserere." This he did to the amazement of Cristofori—the chief singer of the papal band—who had sung it at the Sistine Chapel. What was his astonishment to hear all the turns and changes of expression, the crescendos and diminuendos, the sorrowful passion, and depth of feeling, the exact *manner* reproduced on which the sublime effect entirely depends. The applause was overwhelming, and Mozart was placed on the highest pinnacle of popularity in Rome.

From Rome the Mozarts proceeded to Naples, where Wolfgang played on the pianoforte at the Conservatorio alla Pietà. Here the people were so overwhelmed with astonishment at the boy's playing, that they thought he must be bewitched, and some even said they noticed the magic ring upon his finger. This being whispered to Mozart, he calmly arose, took the ring from his finger, and putting it down on the piano, continued the sonata exactly where he had been interrupted. When the audience found that the music continued equally beautiful without the aid of magic, their admiration knew no bounds.

Wolfgang gave one more grand concert at the house of Prince Kaunitz—his early patron at Vienna—and then returned to Rome, where he had an audience of the Pope, by papal command, and received a Cross and Brevet of a Knight of the Golden Militia, which he wore during the rest of his visit to Rome.

During the whole of this Italian journey, Wolfgang kept up a lively correspondence with his sister "Nannerel," of whom he was passionately fond.

His letters are curious compositions, for he was lamentably ignorant of everything but music, and quite incapable of writing a connected letter, except, indeed, upon a musical subject, when he gave a clear

and sensible criticism. Mozart made now, in 1770, his first débüt as a great dramatic composer, having brought out a grand opera called "Mithridates." Of course this, his first opera, had not the glorious powers which he afterwards developed, but it turned out a grand success, being performed twenty nights in succession.

After the Italian journey and triumphs, Mozart returned to his little peaceful home at Salzburg, to the beloved companionship of his mother and sister, and here, with his childhood ended, we must bring this first notice of Mozart to a close.

An Up-to-Date Letter.

TO SHUFFLUMS CRAB,

HUMBUG HOUSE.

MY DEAR SON,

As you are no longer a Crabling, but are sufficiently advanced in life to make your entrée into Fishdom, a little advice may be beneficial.

To begin with, you may have sometimes compared your own sidelong gait with the straightforward walk of others outside the pale of Crabdom. The custom was originated by an ancestor who coveted fame, and knew no better road to it than by doing something different to every one else. With practice he became such an adept in the sidelong gait, that at last it was an impossibility for him to proceed in any other way. His renown spread far and wide: the peculiarity descended to his children, and nowadays, no Crab, however much he should desire it, would be able to walk in a straightforward manner.

Sidelong gait is but an easy prelude to sidelong speech; and upon this head some hints may be of service. This custom was also originated by an ancestor who desired power and wealth, and found he could acquire both by this means.

Plainness and simplicity are easily recognized and understood. What is once understood ceases to interest. Therefore you will be interesting to others in proportion as you mystify them. Mystery implies secrecy; you must ever seek to hide yourself, and this is

best managed by never assuming the positive. From the moment that a Crab's character is established, he ceases to be a "Nine days Wonder," and has to give way to the next comer. Make it your endeavour to be not a "Nine days" but a "Perpetual Wonder." With such a reputation your fortune will be assured.

Outsiders will wish to label you with the ordinary titles—steady, wild, honest, deceitful, &c. You must determine to go through life without such labels. By this means, you will be constantly in the thoughts of others, who will ever renew their efforts to discover *you*. They will say, "He is such a clever fellow, that we can make nothing of him; he's beyond us altogether." And the hearer will resolve at the earliest opportunity to test his capabilities upon you, and see for himself whether he cannot taste and determine of what brand is this wondrous spirit that defies all attempt at analysis.

A crab once cultivated one style of manner which he exhibited to all, and at all seasons. I need scarcely inform you of the disastrous consequences of this folly. No one bestowed a moment's thought upon him, and he swiftly sank into obscurity. You, my dear son, must regard your manner as a part of your wardrobe, and must vary it as you vary your costume. The quiet thoughtful aspect will hang on one peg; the gay and boisterous on another; the lofty and patronizing will lie beside the submissive and deferential; you will doff the humbly-inquiring for the well-read and condescending; the simple and blunt, for the flattering and suave air. In fact, you will be all things to all men, as may best suit your purpose. Regard all crabs whom you meet as stepping-stones for your own advancement. Make no scruple of standing upon them whenever you may thereby elevate yourself.

Having shown you how essential is Mystery as an elevator, let me advise you as to its use in speech. It is easily done, and the Crabblings of another generation will not need to be taught; for it will be as impossible to them to give a direct answer, as to take a straightforward step. Never allow your meaning to be clear. This is where you will surpass your fellows. In the remarks of the ordinary Crab, the point with its crude outlines, is plainly apparent. Your point, on the contrary, must never shock the spectator in this rude fashion. It must be so clothed and draped that to the naked eye it is invisible; and when surveyed from a height with the aid of powerful magnifying glasses but faintly discernible.

Discard the Indicative and Imperative, and limit yourself to the Conditional, Potential and Subjunctive moods. Follow the example of the celebrated C—— who, when asked whether he was sure of his own existence, replied, "Being unaware of what is comprised in the letter *I*, to tell you that *I* existed would be ridiculous. It would be equally absurd to say that *I* was deceased. For what am *I*? It is impossible to say. The attempt at self-description would be as difficult as the definition of a ghost, who only exists in imagination. Perhaps there is no such thing as *I* at all, and *I* am only the creation of men's disordered minds."

This Crab lived and died with a sacred halo of mystery encircling his brows. You have access to his writings. Let me close this epistle with the recommendation that you make him your reference upon all occasions. Accept the good wishes and parental affection of your so-called Father, otherwise known as Oilus Crab.

V. GOODMAN.

The Romantic and The True.

THE recent able article in "The Englishwoman," entitled, "Is Romantic Love an Evil," by The Owl—this wise bird being unmis- takably of the opinion that it is an unmitigated evil—has been followed by another dissertation on the subject, in the last number of the same Magazine, but leading to a very different conclusion. The writer of the latter article, A. Cun- nick Inchbold, warmly advocates the claims of Romantic Love, and even boldly asserts that Socrates approved it, although the quotations he gives from the wise philosopher by no means bear out this conclusion. In fact, the love that Socrates treats of is a very different sentiment to the so-called Romantic Love under discussion. That this high flown, unreal, and above all transitory hallucination, is essentially selfish is clearly shown by the exacting nature of the passion, and the sacrifices it not unusually demands. A man romantically in love does not scruple to take a girl from a home where she has been surrounded by every care and comfort, to share with him means which barely suffice to support one in comfort, far less a

family. It is no wonder George Meredith speaks of the love season as being "the carnival of egotism," and it may also be added of illusion. Clearly, George Elliot, with her deep insight into human nature, was of the same opinion; "Men and women," she tells us, "make sad mistakes about their own symptoms, taking their vague uneasy longings, sometimes for genius, sometimes for religion, and oftener still for a mighty love." No, love must be built on something more solid than romance, if it is to bear, as Ouida says, "the terrible trials of incessant proximity." This supreme test of affection unfortunately comes too late; and truly it is a test which shatters most of the castles in the air that lovers delight to build. But the love which *The Owl* extols is deepened and intensified by constant companionship. Unwearying patience and tenderness are required in order to make marriage a success—not romantic sentiment. I am not, however, for a moment, advocating marriage without love, but it must be of a totally different nature to the sentiment that enters so largely into the average literature of the present day. Intellectual sympathy, community of interests, and an unselfish attachment is the only solid basis of married life. By the sentimentalists at large, marriage is regarded as though it were the end of all things, whereas, in reality, it is but the beginning of a man or woman's life. The passion that may do very well to carry lovers through a honeymoon of pleasure, is absolutely worthless when the realities of married life, with its attendant cares and duties, have to be faced.

The essential selfishness of Romantic Love has been briefly summed up by *The Owl's* statement that this same romance "has begun in some quarters to supersede the decalogue." We are not surprised to find that amongst the staunchest champions of this sentimental passion, are such avowed advocates of Free Love as Grant Allen and Thomas Hardy. Yet in "*The Woman Who Did*," even Grant Allen is perforce compelled to disclose the fatal result of giving free rein to sentiment, and he wisely kills off the lover before there is time for the illusive charms of this irregular connection to tire. If *The Owl* read this novel, his eyes would no doubt blink with mild disdain as if to say, "I know a better thing than that."

P. B.

New Books.

AMONG the many interesting books that call for more than passing mention, we have only space to particularly notice a few. Of these, and starting with fiction, we have a capitally written little booklet by Cosmo Hamilton (forming one of Fisher Unwin's Autonym Library), entitled "WHICH IS ABSURD," a name that at once arouses curiosity. The story is not on any especial new lines but has the merit of being told briskly, and some of the characters are hit off in quite a masterly style. Altogether this latest contribution to the Autonym Library, fully bears out the reputation of the series for good writing. "LE SELVE" (T. Fisher Unwin) is a contribution from Ouida's pen. We must admit that, as far as plot goes, we are disappointed. There are some dramatic situations in the book, but there is no doubt that it will be read more for its idyllic beauty than for the lesser merits of the story. "THE UGLY MAN," by the author of "A House of Tears" (Messrs. Downey & Co.) Here is plot with a vengeance! The incidents are all of a thrilling melodramatic character, and there is mystery enough to satisfy the most exacting reader in this respect. There is the mysterious disappearance of a priceless emerald, and the various attendant complications. All this and more is woven into a very readable if rather shallow story, and will agreeably pass away an idle hour or two.

"THE MONEY SPINNER, AND OTHER CHARACTER NOTES," by Henry Seton Merriman and S. G. Tallentyre (Smith, Elder & Co.), illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Several of these sketches are reprints from the "Cornhill Magazine," and all are good, some even rising to excellence; though perhaps the first, from which the title of the collection is derived, is the best told. The art of writing a short story in a telling manner, without unduly nipping the incident or expanding the description at the expense of dialogue is a rare one, and with few notable exceptions—among which, Mrs. W. K. Clifford's sketches must be included—is only beginning to be cultivated. These character notes, therefore, will be welcomed by those who appreciate good short stories.

The Drama.

THE wordless play now on at the "Prince of Wales's Theatre," set to music by Mario Costa, is an able drama of a human life, and, as the name indicates, of *Pierrot's Life*. The dumb show is so ably expressed by the six comedians who make up the caste, that the descriptive music of the pantomime is not at all essential to the interpretation of the story. The play itself is so true to nature with its mingled mirth and deep pathos, that it appeals to all sorts and conditions of men, particularly to lovers of good acting and good music. The scene where the erring husband, after deserting his wife for a factory girl, returns to seek her forgiveness, is pathetic in the extreme, and the reconciliation effected by their little child is no less touching.

We are not surprised to find that *A Night Out* is still running at the Vaudeville, for the piece is so excessively funny, that while there are playgoers who prefer a good laugh to a cry, it must continue to draw a large audience. Indeed the play is enough to provoke laughter from anyone. The plot lends itself to the most amusing situations, as may be readily conceived by a brief sketch of the piece. We are introduced at first to a married woman and her admirer, who manage to evade the husband's surveillance and arrange to "go out on the spree." By a series of curious coincidences the very venerable father of many daughters, apparently all of the same age, also arrives at the place fixed for the rendezvous, viz., an hotel, as well as some other people who are mutually acquainted. The dénouement is very funny, and its success as a farce unqualified.

Since the introduction of *Under the Red Robe* at the Haymarket, the demand for tickets has been so great, that only those who apply a week or two in advance have been able to secure seats. The subject differs entirely from *The Prisoner of Zenda*, although in other respects it bears a resemblance to this drama, notably in the quality of the play. Mr. Rose has certainly achieved a great success in dramatising these two plays with such happy results, and though perhaps *The Prisoner of Zenda* may be a better novel than Mr. Stanley Weyman's, there is little to choose between the two plays.

M. W.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

TAKING STOCK OF EACH OTHER.

THE season was in full swing when the Falconers arrived at the “Grand,” and the bride was as hard-worked as any dock-labourer who takes his chance and uses it. Night and day—day and night, no rest at any time except in the morning, when the noises of the stirring world outside made sleep a difficulty if not an impossibility; but, as Falconer said, they would have plenty of time for rest in quiet Old England, now they must be wide awake so as to miss nothing; and Beatrice joyfully agreed with him. She delighted in everything—the grandeur of the hotel, with its spacious rooms and broad staircases, the long bewildering corridors, the mixture of all nationalities in the wide hall, the cool splash of the fountain, and the grateful shade of the palms, when the thermometer was up to go in the shade—the continual throng loitering about the vestibule or passing to and fro in the pursuit of friends or pleasures—the animation everywhere, the enthusiastic greetings, the frank expression of every feeling, so different to the repression of everything in self-contained England! The subtle charm of Paris seemed to enter into her veins, and Lady Falconer at the Grand Hotel, or driving in the Bois, or sitting at the Opera ablaze with diamonds, or peeping stealthily into a Café Chantant, was a different creature to Miss Kennard, daughter of the Rector of a London parish. The exhilarating air excited her and made her feel insanely inclined to sing at the top of her voice, as she came down the great public stair-

case with a bevy of men always waiting at the bottom to stare at "la belle Brune." If she dropped a flower or a handkerchief so many hands were stretched out to pick it up, so many cigarettes let fall in the hurry, so many elaborate bows made, that she could scarcely keep her countenance.

"I must never drop anything again," she said with a laugh and a blush, as they drove off one afternoon in their hired victoria, "or they will think that I do it on purpose."

"As if a woman ever did that sort of thing unintentionally!" her husband said coolly.

It was a speech like this which sometimes made a dissonance between them. Beatrice shrank back as if annoyed; "You don't know me—if you think I could."

"I know a great many women who would," with a short laugh.

"But you don't like them—you can't say that you do," turning round with a challenge in her eyes.

"I like women to have plenty of go," he said doggedly.

"Then I am sorry to disappoint you," icily.

"You absurd little goose! You never disappoint me," smiling into her angry face, and refusing to recognise the fact that there was any excuse for annoyance. "You are brimful of 'go' to the tips of your fingers, only you haven't had a chance of bringing it out; you've been like a wild hawk in a cage. I've opened the door, and you will soon feel the strength of your wings, see if you don't."

"I was as free as any other girl—properly brought up," trying to look prim, which was a difficult expression for her face to catch.

"I wasn't brought up—at all—only dragged up—so I know nothing about it," he said gloomily. "There's Prince W., by Jove! I hadn't an idea he was in Paris. Well, he'll know you again," with a laugh, as the man in question, with a pale lean face, a hooked nose and a pointed beard, shot a piercing glance at the wife whilst he bowed to the husband.

"I don't like his face at all," she said with decision.

"Glad to hear it. He's the worst man in Paris, and that's saying as much as you can."

"Then why do you have anything to do with him?" with judicial severity.

"There would have been some excuse in asking that, if I had

said the 'best.' I never said I was a saint. Why shouldn't I get on with the prince of sinners?"

She did not answer, but looked away from him, at the lively scene around, and indeed there was quite enough to occupy her attention. The Bois was crowded as usual in the height of the season, and most of the leaders of fashion were there in toilettes that were supposed to give the *cachet* to their particular style of costume—a style to be repeated in all the principal capitals of the civilised globe, and to go from them to the second-rate cities, and so on *ad infinitum*.

"Let us get out of this," Lord Falconer said impatiently, as they found their way blocked by a four-in-hand. "Anything's better than sitting still behind a pair of horses."

Beatrice got out obediently, for it was all the same to her. She could use her eyes either in or out of the carriage, and she had none of the fine lady's rooted objection to making use of her legs. She enjoyed everything to the full, and she could not understand the almost fierce impatience which came over her husband one day when she had inveigled him into the Salon, and she ventured to stand for five minutes before any picture that took her fancy. He always hurried her on as if a train were waiting for them round the corner, and laughed at her remonstrances, asking what was the good of wasting your time on painted men and women, when the living ones were close at hand and a thousand times more interesting. As to the Louvre, with all its world-famed treasures of art, he absolutely shuddered when she mentioned it.

"Wait till we are both too old and too ugly to interest anyone but ourselves. Then when we've absolutely nothing better to do, I'll bring you over here, and we'll go through the whole lot like a couple of convicts at the treadmill," he said consolingly one wet day, when they could not make up their minds as to what they should do.

"Don't you care for pictures or sculptures, or anything in the way of art?" she asked with something like dismay.

"So long as I think you the prettiest little woman in the world, what does it matter?"

"But that has nothing to do with it," she said with a smile because he had drawn her towards him and given her an appreciative kiss, "you shut out a whole world of enjoyment if you only care for living men and women."

"But I don't—I can rave about a horse, and go quite silly over a dog. Now are you satisfied? And I can stay out a whole opera—or at least the last half, if there are enough pretty faces in the house to make it worth while."

"I believe you talk like this only to tease me," she said slowly, fighting against the fear that this was really the truth, and her preconceived notions of his character an utter illusion.

He looked at her curiously, feeling instinctively that she was weighing him in the balance—and finding him wanting. Absurd! The little goose had evidently a craze for æstheticism which was all very well for women, and might keep them out of mischief, but if she expected him to join in it she would be disappointed. Might just as well ask an elephant to have a game of spillikins.

After all she was very hard to please, for according to his lights he had done his duty by her to the wonder and admiration of his own inner self. He had stuck as close to her as her shadow, and never given any fellow a chance of making up to her. Bignon's being too warm for this warm spring weather, he had taken her to dine at one of the best of the numerous chalets in the Champs Élysées where dinner is anything but the prosaic reality that it is usually made in England; and afterwards to some open-air Café Chantant close by, where the songs were not too broad for her propriety-loving ears. And she had enjoyed it thoroughly, with the frank enjoyment of an unreserved nature, with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, and a happy little laugh breaking out now and then, in the irrepressible delight of her heart. In the choice of theatres he had been as careful as an old grandmother, turning his back on the delights of the Eden, whose meretricious ballets he considered as a feast for his own eye, but just the reverse for his wife's, and taking places instead at the "Français," where he yawned the whole time in spite of the excellent acting; at the Opera Comique, where the amusement was occasionally more on a level with his intelligence, and at the Grand Opera, where the admiration he ought to have given to the music was lavished on every pretty face and well-dressed woman in the audience. His club, the unexclusive "Épatant," at the corner of the Champs Élysées and the Rue Boissy d'Anglas, he had entirely neglected, though he had the liveliest remembrance of the daring plays and free-and-easy concerts got up by its artistic fraternity—of the wild gambling that used to

go on in the small hours, when the steadier members looked on and wondered, whilst the unsteady were ready to stake anything under Heaven in the excitement of the moment—and sure to repent of it bitterly and uselessly when the dawn stared them in the face, as they walked home through the silent streets, and told them in the broadest way that they were *des imbéciles*.

That is what Falconer called “life,” and he had given it up for the sake of his wife, and yet he could swear that she was not satisfied. Hang it all! he could not go on like this for ever, he said to himself as he watched the pattering rain-drops.

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE CLOUD.

THEIR last night in Paris—and Beatrice was spending it alone with a novel, waiting for her husband. It was the first time she had done so, but anyone who knew Lord Falconer could safely prophesy that it would not be the last. She had sent her maid to bed after she had performed her services, and now, clothed in a charming white wrapper, and with her dark hair braided in one long plait, she stretched herself on the smart but unluxurious sofa, and prepared to read by the light of a shaded lamp. But her life at the present moment was more interesting than any fiction, and the book rested on the delicate laces of her wrapper whilst her thoughts wandered from one point of interest to another in the events of the last three weeks.

They had dined that evening at the Embassy, and had met some of the pleasantest people in Paris—diplomatists with the last best story of some celebrity of the day—artists who had already made a name either in our own Academy or in the Salon—travellers who had knocked about the world and rid themselves of all inconvenient prejudices as well as of superfluous flesh—men who bore historic names and were busy filling up another page of history in their daily lives, and women who were charming because of their beauty or their wit, or their talent for making themselves agreeable.

Memories of the past hang about that celebrated house in the Rue du Fauborg St. Honoré, but the Falconers knew nothing of them, and contented themselves with the charming actualities of the

present. Beatrice's eyes had rested with a certain amount of interest on the treasures in various shapes collected from Canada and India, which greeted her sight as she passed through the wide hall, but as she lay back on the sofa with hands clasped behind her small dark head, all the brilliance of the accessories remained in the background of her mind, and she was thinking of the pleasant stroll in the star-lit gardens, as scraps of conversation came floating through her brain.

Lady Falconer's face and figure had attracted much notice in that rather uninteresting church in the Rue d'Aguesseau, and an impressionable young Secretary of Embassy, who had paid more attention to the lines of her well defined eye-brows than to the words in his prayer-book, had gone home and raved about her to all who would listen to him. His kindly *chefesse* could not place him at the side of his "dream of beauty" at the long dinner table, but he had seized his own opportunity in the cool fragrant silence of the garden.

The Hon. Geoffrey Talbot was not alarmingly good looking, neither was he a giant with the physique of a prize-fighter. In fact there was nothing remarkable about him, and many women would have forgotten whether he were dark or fair, whilst his soft voice lingered in their ears, and his light speeches were remembered long after they were spoken. He knew how to talk to women without any seeming effort, but so pleasantly, that after a visit prolonged beyond the usual measure of a morning call, regrets were often expressed because he was running away in such a hurry. As if he ever were in a hurry—he scorned the notion, but he rarely missed a train.

Beatrice had found him a delightful companion—and though he was peculiarly frank as to his boundless admiration of her, there was nothing offensive in his manner of expressing it. He said he must cultivate her husband the next time he ran over to London, and he craftily alluded to her father's splendid sermon preached the year before in the Rue d'Aguesseau, and asked if he were likely to occupy a London pulpit during the course of the winter, as if he were resolved to apply for leave on purpose to hear him! Having thus laid the foundations for a serious friendship, he went on to lighter topics, and was so witty and amusing that Beatrice was quite sorry when Falconer came to fetch her, and told her it was time "to slope."

The refined society and the pleasant conversation had been a refreshment to her mind, and she was feeling agreeably exhilarated as they drove through the court-yard.

"Feel as if I'd been on stilts all the evening," grumbled her husband. "Must take it out of me at the club."

"Come home and talk it over," she said coaxingly. "I have enjoyed it so immensely."

"More than I have. A dinner party is about as dismal as a funeral. Stop!" Out he got at the corner of the Rue Boissy d'Anglas and left her to return alone. She was chilled and disappointed, but she got over the feeling very soon, and felt quite happy as she settled herself on the sofa.

The American family in the next suite of rooms came home from one of the theatres, and expressed their opinions with the utmost frankness as to the "unclothedness of the ballet," and the utter absence of morals in the plot, or the acting. Beatrice laughed as she listened to the chattering going on in the corridor, and hoped that "Poppa" and "Mamma" would not take their "gurls" to the same theatre again. There is not much silence in the Grand, but what is left tries to make itself felt when the places of amusement are closed, and most people have returned to their rooms. Hour after hour passed away and a feeling of nervousness crept over the lonely bride. She would not go to bed though she could do no good by sitting up, but waited on, listening to every footstep that came near, in a state of restless expectation. The quiet, conscientious tourist walked on tip-toe with the uncertain step of the absent man who had forgotten the number of his room, but had remembered that others might be asleep though he was up and about, whilst the *nouveau riche* strode past with the tread of an elephant, as if the disturbance of other people's slumbers formed part of his inseparable swagger. A few doors banged, and then there was again a fair imitation of quiet. She yawned—the yawn was followed by a sigh—the sigh merged into a smile. How absurd she was to worry about his being a little late! "Men are what women make them," Mr. Talbot had quoted that evening, and if so, what would she make of Falconer? It did not strike her that he was made of malleable stuff; even in this small matter of coming home with her, he had not shown the slightest sign of yielding his will to hers, as bridegrooms sometimes did in novels. And if he gave up to her it would be hateful after all. Mr. Talbot

had put that sentence the wrong way. "Women are what men make them:" that is the truth—the real truth—and she would despise a man who made himself into a mat for her feet to tread on. A hand was laid on the handle of the door, which she had left unlocked on purpose for him, and her husband walked into the room. He looked more surprised than pleased when he saw her, and said roughly, "What the — are you sitting up for?"

She had jumped up in her eagerness, but at that unexpected greeting the eagerness died out of expression and attitude at once.

"I was waiting for you, but I am sorry that I did," she said quietly, with her hands clasped limply and hanging down, whilst her eyes fixed themselves upon his face with an expression that he was not in a state to fathom.

His manner changed abruptly, as if he had suddenly become conscious that there was something amiss with himself. "Sorry, little woman?" he said more gently, "well then, I'm deuc— very glad. Never come across such a face as yours wherever I go." He put his arms round her, kissing her effusively, but she remained perfectly passive with no glad response bounding through her veins. "Come and sit down," he said, moving towards the sofa, "and let us have a chat."

"No, I'm tired, I don't want to chat," drawing herself away from him, with a slight shiver of disgust.

The next moment she was standing alone in her bedroom, her heart throbbing painfully, her breath coming in gasps. She put her hands to her forehead, and stood quite still—thinking. It seemed to her as if she had been living in a dream, a golden dream of almost impossible happiness, and some unkind demon had destroyed the spell and restored her suddenly, and without the slightest preparation, to the hideous realities of a detestable life. But no—no—no—it was not half as bad as that—she was making a huge fuss about a trifle. He had been bored all the evening—though why she could not conceive, and after that he went amongst his old friends. And she could imagine how they welcomed him back. He was over-excited, that was all. Then the door behind her opened. She raised her head, but felt as if she absolutely dared not look over her shoulder.

"What's up, old girl?" Lord Falconer said, speaking very slowly, "you are not going to have a fit of the sulks every time I go to the Club, I hope?"

"It's not that—not that at all," turning her face sufficiently for him to study her profile, but keeping her eyes on the ground.

"Tell you what it is, you're done up." Then his attention was caught by her plait, which was coming undone at the end. "Glorious hair—shame to cramp it up—hate anything cramped," and taking hold of it, he unplaited it, and threw the loosened hair in a cloud over her shoulders.

"Oh why did you do that?" she cried in remonstrance.

"I may do what I like with my own. You belong to me, don't you? And, by Jove, I've got all I paid for," with a sudden change, looking her over from head to foot with the warmest admiration in his eyes. Then he took her in his arms, and she, willing to believe the best of him, thought she had cruelly misjudged him, and burst into penitent tears, her small head resting on his shoulder.

The next day they left Paris, in order to be in time for the Epsom Summer meeting, and so the poor modern attempt at romance in a honeymoon came to an end, and the prose of real life began. The time for dreams had passed by, and any bride who hoped to be up to date must prove herself to be wide awake.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BISHOP AT WORK.

"I saw Pemberton to-day," remarked the Bishop as he stood on the hearthrug of the fireless grate in the drawing-room of his unpretentious house in Talavera Crescent. There was less repose in the expression of his well defined features, and a few more lines had gathered round his eyes, since he had thrown himself heart and soul into the work of his diocese. His last book had involved him in an exciting controversy with some of the leaders of modern thought—a controversy which he had to carry on from month to month, lest he should seem to confess a weakness on his own side of the question which he was far from feeling. At the same time he was most keenly interested in the subject of Christian Education, which he considered the most pressing question of the day, added to which he had found his diocese like a machine, in a state of dis-repair with broken springs and a scarcity of oil.

It was only now and then that he could snatch a few moments for

quiet talk with his sister; and she looked forward to these scraps of time as to the one gleam of sunshine in a foggy day.

Miss Judith never grumbled, and if she could not get a whole loaf, she contrived to make merry over a few pitiful crumbs; but she missed her niece every hour of the day, and nothing and nobody made up for her absence. Beatrice had a broad mind like her father's and could take an interest in the more serious things of life as well as in its dissipations, and her aunt had been much amused at hearing her frank opinion about everything under the sun. They used to have playful arguments together over their needlework, and many grave questions were debated over a piece of knitting for the "Deep-sea Fisheries" or a frock for the child of an improvident greengrocer whom Beatrice had discovered in some alley; and when they drove out in the one-horse landau, which was the only carriage to which the rector would rise, as it saved the expense of a brougham for evening use, the girl had always something fresh to say, which made the time pass pleasantly. Now the poor old lady was left much alone, for it was a "far cry" to Talavera Crescent from Belgravia or Mayfair, and the many friends who bore her still in mind were always meaning to come and see her, but rarely found time for the effort. Sometimes Lady Falconer's smart victoria would dash round the corner, and in a few minutes Miss Judith would be whisked off for a delightful drive far away from the slums, with Beatrice's bright face turned towards hers as she told her some of her doings in the gay world. But this was not often, for Lady Falconer's engagements were many, and were daily on the increase, and her husband liked her to go into society as much as possible, though gradually he returned to his old bachelor habits and left her to fulfil her social duties unaided. Her resolute young shoulders were quite equal to the task that was thrown upon them, only she considered the arrangement unfair, and she told him so now and again, but with no result.

Aunt Judy never doubted her niece's affection however long she stayed away, but she did cast a thought now and then towards Mr. Pemberton, who used to be one of their most constant visitors in the old days, but who now had dropped off, to her surprise. The distance could not keep him away, for if it were too far to walk surely he could have taken a hansom to call on an old friend. She looked up with keen interest when the Bishop remarked that he had seen him that

day. "Well, what did he say for himself?" she asked, as she dropped a stitch, because of divided interests.

"That he was perfectly ashamed of himself, but that if he could venture to look you in the face, he would ask for a cup of tea on Sunday. I hope I shall be here, but I doubt it," he added looking over his bulky notebook.

"He will be so disappointed if you can't. I wonder if we could get Beatrice. They always have such fun together," her eyes twinkling with the delight of anticipation.

"I fancy Pemberton could do without Falconer," the Bishop said, as he rubbed his close-shaven chin.

"We need not insist upon his coming," and Aunt Judy gave a little laugh at the naughtiness of her own suggestion. There was a tacit understanding between herself and her brother that Beatrice's husband should never be discussed, but she felt very much tempted to infringe upon it at the moment.

"And he won't press it, I am equally sure of that. But he may not allow Beatrice to come without him."

Miss Judith bridled up like an offended bantam, and could not refrain from muttering something quite dangerous under her breath.

"Never knew such a procrastinating fellow as Pemberton," the Bishop went on, as he walked to the bookstand in the corner, and took up a small volume. "He is just as fond of us as ever, but he would have put off coming to see us till we were back at St. Christopher's, if it hadn't been for that boy; his nephew, I mean.

"Oh, is Hugh coming too?" looking very much pleased. "Then we *must* have Beatrice. It would be rather slow for him only to have two old fogies to talk to."

"There is one element we possess in which she is wanting—safety," remarked the Bishop, drily.

"My dear, the child is so—so infatuated with her own husband that she won't look at any other man," Miss Judith said with the confidence of a perfectly discreet mind.

"Then she must be very different to the other married women of our acquaintance," replied her brother, who on account of his persistent widowhood had been subject to constant attacks from his fair Parishioners, and therefore, in spite of his apparent indifference, had learnt to know their ways. "But Hugh and she have known each other, off and on, ever since she was able to suck a piece of coral. I

was only joking about the danger," he added with a smile as he went to the door.

"Are you going?" Miss Judith asked in a tone of disappointment.

"Yes, I've a young fellow coming to see me who wants to go up for ordination this Advent. I've been trying to clear away his difficulties, and I fancy that I am making way; but it is hard work."

"Stop him, don't let him go on. We don't want men who doubt," Miss Kennard said anxiously, for she was always in a quiescent state of alarm about the laxity of opinion allowed by many dignitaries of the Church in the present day.

"Honest doubt is not to be roughly handled, Judy. This young fellow is honest, which is everything, and he has thought a great deal, which is much. We cannot all be Liddons."

"No, but how can he teach others?" gently.

"Far better from having been through the same difficulty beforehand. If it is given to me to help him on to firm ground, he will be able to act as a better guide to others—a sort of theological Cook, you know," he added quizzically.

Edward Kennard was one of the busiest men in England at this time, so as soon as he reached his study, as Mr. George Wenham, whom he was expecting, had not yet arrived, he drew a sheet of paper towards him, and plunged instantly into intricate calculations concerning the probable expenses of a new scheme which he had just inaugurated for the benefit of the Voluntary Schools in his Diocese. He had got into the thick of it when the door-bell rang; but when Mr. Wenham came in, he greeted him in a disembarrassed manner, as if his mind were entirely free from any *arrière pensée*. The embryo candidate for Holy Orders was naturally shy and reserved, with a special aptitude for hiding all the pleasanter qualities of which he was really possessed; but the Bishop was too clever for him. He found out the real worth of the man in spite of his unprepossessing exterior, and in his anxiety to secure him as a future champion of the Faith, he handled him with infinite tact and delicacy.

After a few minutes George Wenham's shyness dropped from him like an outer garment which he could dispense with in a pleasanter atmosphere. The innermost secrets of his heart were drawn from him, and he found himself confessing everything from the first doubt which had crept into his mind as a boy, as he listened in a bewildered way to one of the finest preachers of the day, till that one doubt

took to itself another and another till they became the torments of his life, and his feet seemed to be slipping from under him, as they searched wildly after firmer ground, and found it nowhere.

The Bishop was just the man to help him, for he knew every inch of the ground as a soldier knows every bush, and every stone, and every rut, on a battle field, when he has fought for it inch by inch with his life in his hand. Nothing he enjoyed more than placing his vast stores of learning at the disposal of any man to whom they could be of infinite use; and as George Wenham listened to his full rich voice, and his eager mind followed his clear definitions, he already caught a glimmer of light in the darkness which would soon be like the sunshine, and flood his life.

It was eight o'clock when he stood up to take his leave. His old shyness came over him again and made him stammer over his thanks, but the Bishop shook his hand heartily and told him to come again on the following evening at the same hour. "And if anything should make it impossible for me to see you," he added cautiously, as the remembrance of numerous engagements flashed across his mind, "Mr. Carrington will be here, and will be just as useful to you as I should myself. Good-bye; very glad to have seen you."

As he closed the door upon Mr. Wenham, the Bishop pulled out his watch and ascertained that his dinner-hour had arrived. He also became conscious that he had a fine appetite, which discussion had sharpened; but alas! the butler, looking as solemn as if he had to announce a calamity, informed him that a lady had been waiting to see him for the last half hour.

"Oh, poor thing!" ejaculated the Bishop, "show her in at once."

"But dinner, my lord?" with a reproachful glance.

"Tell Miss Kennard not to wait," was the prompt reply, which made Martin say to himself, "catch me being a Bishop if they didn't give me time for my victuals."

CHAPTER VIII.

EMPTY CORNERS.

A CHEERFUL party gathered together in No. 31 Talavera Crescent on the following Sunday afternoon. Miss Kennard had sent a messenger all the way down to Piccadilly for some cakes which her niece was

supposed to especially favour, and she had also put on her best cap with the heliotrope ribbons, which was kept for grand occasions. Lady Falconer came without her worst half, and made up her mind to enjoy herself. As she stepped into the carriage, a study of youth and beauty clad in petunia velvet, she left behind her all the colossal anxieties of her fashionable life, which comprised the life at home—a vastly different thing to what some of us know as the “home life.”

“Ta ta, little woman,” Falconer said, taking his eternal cigarette out of his mouth for a brief moment, “give my love to the old lady—and tell the governor that I am fast developing into a saint.”

“No good, he wouldn’t believe it,” shaking her head as she slowly buttoned her perfectly fitting *Suède* glove.

Her husband studied her from the crown of her plumed hat to the tip of the French shoe, whose delicate point protruded beyond the velvet skirt; and even to his blunted perceptions it was evident that every detail was perfect. “Something up in Van Demon’s Land (which was his playful name for the unaristocratic Crescent). Bet you any money there’s somebody out there besides old Pemberton.”

“And if there is—why not?” she asked, without much attention to grammar.

“Please yourself,” carelessly. “But look here, my dear girl,” a growing irritation in his voice, “don’t waste your fascinations on that pious young prig, whom I should like to kick on the first opportunity.”

“When I’m lucky enough to meet ‘a pious prig’ I will give him your message—if it is a message,” she said quietly, and then slightly drawing up her neck to show that she might be offended next time he insulted her friends, she walked out of the smoking-room into the hall, leaving the door wide open behind her, as a small piece of feminine revenge.

James Pemberton was in one of his brightest moods, and told story after story in his inimitably quaint way. Miss Judith forgave him freely for his long absence, and laughed till the tears rolled down her withered cheeks, with the happy lightheartedness of sixteen instead of sixty, when he turned a perfect fire of chaff on his old friend—Beatrice. Hugh was completely thrown into the shade by his uncle, but was content to wait for his own innings later on,

whilst the Bishop, having cast his cares behind him, entered into the fun with the keenest appreciation.

The only person there who seemed at all inclined to act the part of the skeleton at a banquet of one of the Pharaoh's, was John Carrington, the Bishop's chaplain. He was a tall man with about as little flesh on his bones as the aforesaid skeleton, with a large nose, a pair of short sighted eyes, and a high forehead. His shoulders were too narrow; his limbs had a disjointed appearance, as if they only partly belonged to him, and his gravity was prodigious.

"I had almost made up my mind not to speak to you again," Beatrice remarked as she threw a glance to Hugh over his uncle's shoulder.

"So it seemed," he said imperturbably. "What have I done?"

"Nothing! That is what I complain of," busying herself with the teacups. "One very important duty you have left undone."

"Only one? I must be a model."

"Not at all. I speak of the only one that comes under my notice."

"And as we have not met since the twenty-second of May——"

"Exactly!" with an expressive glance. "You've never come near the very oldest friend you ever had."

"No; you see we were once like a couple of tadpoles together—about the same size and quality. Now you've developed into a magnificent frog—and a tadpole's nowhere."

"Mr. Pemberton, am I like a frog?" appealing to Hugh's uncle.

"Only when you croak," he said promptly, with a twinkle in his eye.

"It was simply a true definition of the situation," Hugh said in his own defence.

"No, it was an absurd exaggeration. I am the same person as I was before. I look the same, don't I?"

He looked straight into her charming face, as she turned it towards him, meeting her mischievous dark eyes with the frank steady gaze that she knew of old. He studied her in the same imperturbable fashion as he would a portrait by Millais. "You are the same of course, but with a difference. You are years older than you were when I went to India."

"Quite an old woman, I suppose," with a slight pout.

"You were a child when I left, you are a woman now," he said with the air of a professor.

"A girl, please," she pleaded, as if the point were a tender one. "Anyone may be a girl until she has struck twenty-one."

"Depends upon the type of man she marries," pulling his moustache reflectively, as he felt that he was touching on a dangerous topic. "I could imagine that a rector's wife living in some out-of-the-way village, with no excitement, and no neighbour, might remain a girl till she was forty."

"A mummy, you mean. Utter stagnation! What could be worse than that?" drawing a deep breath, as she thought of it with horror—"I'd rather be an old woman at thirty, and live my life whilst it lasted, instead of going to sleep like a dormouse."

"I wish I had a chance," put in the Bishop, who would really have been miserable if not over-worked and under-rested.

"So do I," said Mr. Pemberton with equal mendacity. "Sleep's not in it now. We are all in such a detestable hurry. 'Pon my word as soon as I lay my head on the pillow, in comes Pratt with the hot water."

"You don't keep Pratt in proper subjection," Beatrice asserted.

"Men must work," suggested Hugh, imagining the busy barrister sending away his hot water, and calling out airily "Call me at eleven!"

"And women too—people have a craze for committees, and when they can't get anyone else they apply to me," with her chin in the air.

"Very flattering—so nice to be a *pis-aller*," chaffingly.

"Very useful things," reprovingly. "They fill up empty niches of the world."

"As old friends are used for filling up the empty corners in a fashionable life?"

"There are empty corners sometimes," she said frankly.

"Then I shall make a point of coming to Curzon Street."

"When you've nothing else to do?" sarcastically.

"When my curiosity gets the better of my prudence. Seriously, I should like to find out if there is anything left of Bee Kennard in Lady Falconer," with the utmost gravity.

"I've wasted all this time in trying to prove it to you," lifting up her hands.

"Ah, there *was* an effort, and you've been acting a part. Yes, uncle I'm quite ready to go," getting up from his seat. "Take me away, I've lost my illusions."

"Only this moment? You've kept them very long."

"They died hard, and nothing can resuscitate them," shaking his head dolefully.

"Go in for realities," put in Beatrice. "This is the day for dry hard fact."

"I know it is, and women are always the first to tell me so. Too much education everywhere, and imagination has been shoved off the path. No novels soon, only volumes of compiled statistics."

"Don't sneer at statistics, my dear boy," remarked the Bishop, "nothing half so impressive to the minds of the middle class. They consider them the plums in the cake."

"Because they make it indigestible?" James Pemberton said in a tone of inquiry, as he turned away to wish Miss Kennard good-bye.

Beatrice drove home in a cheerful frame of mind, exhilarated by the meeting with her old friends. They were like a breath of fresh air to her—air from some breezy common, untainted by the noxious fumes comprised in the London atmosphere. She supposed that her husband called Hugh Pemberton "a prig" because he did not make love to every pretty woman he came across; but as for herself, she was only too thankful to find a man who was neither an octogenarian, nor a stick, who would talk to her as if she had rather more than one idea in her head—and that idea—not flirtation. Aldershot was not at the other end of the earth, so they might meet pretty constantly, and it would be nice to have this one safe friend amongst her crowd of acquaintances. If Falconer had the bad taste to object to him, he need never come across him, but there could be no reason why such a dear old friend should not drop in just in the same way as so many others had begun to do.

The sound of church bells was in the air, and she thought of her father preaching that evening in a crowded church in Kennington. Out of the hundreds who would listen to his eloquence, surely there would be a few who would go back to their daily drudgery, helped and comforted by some words that he had let fall.

Just at that moment a hansom whisked round the corner of Mount Street, and she caught sight of a ruddy fringe and an

"impossible" hat, which she recognised at once as belonging to Mrs. Sartoris. A man, dark as any gipsy, was smiling into the pretty painted face, and Beatrice drew back, as if she had been stung. The bells were still ringing when she stopped at her own door, but they no longer woke an echo in her heart. The contrast between her father's position in the pulpit, and her husband's in that hansom was striking. Revolted and disgusted, she walked slowly up the stairs, with set lips, and frowning brows. Her life had suddenly gone awry, and all the bells calling to prayer and praise made only a discord, being no more in harmony with her thoughts.

(To be continued.)

The Ideal House,

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

ON THE CHOICE OF A DOMICILE.

In our last paper we decided the all important question of the couple who were to live in the Ideal House. It will now be our duty to find a house for the ideal couple to live in. It is almost as grave a question to fix upon the ideal house as to determine the occupants.

The situation of the house must depend upon the occupation, tastes and means of Edwin and Angelina. It is possible that Edwin may have a family residence, in which Angelina must be contented to make her home. In that case, Angelina must be prepared to sacrifice a good many of her early ideals, because ancestral homes are usually completely furnished with every requisite, and only a few improvements and alterations are made for the home-coming of the bride. In most novels, when a man brings home a bride to an ancestral mansion he sends orders to a London firm to have her boudoir and her bedroom entirely redecorated and refurnished; then follows a description of two appalling apartments in which most Angelinas would be extremely unhappy.

For my part, if I had married a man with twenty ancestral homes, I should strongly object to having, for my own special

sanctum, a room done up according to the tastes of some large firm of upholsterers. Think of a tender young Angelina, with her head full of romance and her heart full of love, being expected to make herself at home in a white and gold boudoir in which everything was new! Why, even the *Lares* and *Penates* of her predecessor would be preferable. Think of the shining white walls, of the white paint and gold mouldings, of the beautiful yellow silk curtains draping the large bow windows and the yellow silk cushions softening the window-seat; think of the glare of it all. Poor little young Angelina; don't you pity her? Think of waking every morning in a brand new pink and green bedroom, smelling a little of the cabinet maker's shop—as all new furniture does—where all her girlish treasures would look strangely and pathetically out of place, and she, poor child, would look most out of place of all! She has a new maid, who puts out the new fittings of her new dressing bag, with her new initials emblazoned on them; there is a new place for all her new things, and it is not to be wondered at if sometimes she wishes herself at home again in her shabby old bedroom with the chintz curtains and valances, with the big arm chair where her dog slept at night, and that slightly darker patch on the rose-coloured eiderdown where the Angora cat has slept for the last six or seven years. She feels that she could never let Turk sleep in that grand arm-chair that is so very luxurious and yet so extremely uninviting; somehow or another Turk has been relegated to the stables, and the Angora sleeps in the hall. Nobody knows how dreadful the feeling of newness is to the heart of Angelina in her new home. She feels as if she had lost her own personality altogether, much as they say a soul feels when it first leaves the poor broken or outworn human body. Oh, if any Edwin, who has an ancestral home to which to take his Angelina, will be advised by me, he will give no order to West-end firms to have boudoir and bedroom suite re-decorated and refurnished in the most *recherché* and expensive style. No, no, he will order the prettiest rooms to be decked with fresh flowers for the mistress's home-coming, and he will say to her when she has had time to look over the place: "Angelina, my dear, I have touched nothing. You see what the place is; I thought your boudoir should be done up for you, but I didn't have it done to welcome you, because I thought you would rather live in a room which was furnished to your own choosing and directions." I am sure Angelinas, whose Edwins take this particular bit of advice, will bless me.

If Edwin has had a previous Angelina, he will be wise, before he brings his new bride home, to change his abode if possible. In the case of an ancestral home it is not, of course, so necessary; partly because no large house is thoroughly impregnated with the tastes of its last mistress—I mean, there are the old heirlooms, and possessions of furniture, of pictures, of china, of plate, of custom; these all carry their own weight, and probably only the private apartments of the last mistress will be found redolent of her personality. I have known a bride taken to see the house of her husband that was to be, who entered it with the firm feeling that at every turn she should see the image of her predecessor. I have known an Angelina, neither young nor foolish, who never breathed freely until she had left the abode of her whom she succeeded behind her. I have known an Angelina, marrying a widower, who made it a point of honour that she should make no change in her new abode, who took on the old servants, who carried out the old rules so far as she knew them, who never moved a chair; and I have known, when a visitor unintentionally did effect a change in the drawing-room, that particular Edwin give a sigh of relief and say, "Oh, Angelina, I am so glad you have moved that chair, I always hated it there—it always seemed to me to be in the way." Then that Angelina took the hint, and that domicile was changed—oddly enough, to Edwin's untold satisfaction.

But perhaps the most important question for us to consider is that of the Edwin and Angelina who have had no earlier ties, who are starting married life for the first time and together. This Edwin and Angelina, not being troubled with an ancestral home, must perforce choose one. Well, there are a good many things to be considered; their means first of all. And to the Edwin and Angelina to whom means are the first consideration, I would offer this golden rule: never over-house yourself; never choose a house that will be a burden; never choose a house that will require more servants to keep clean than you have means to comfortably pay.

To those living in London, the flat has many advantages. In the flat Angelina need never be nervous if she is left without her Edwin. There are no tramps or beggars to annoy the inmates of flats; Angelina will have no cause to worry when the snow falls, because she will never be troubled with an imperative policeman suggesting that the snow on the side walks be cleared away by a certain hour. And in a flat there is certainly more check upon everything than

is possible in a private house—I mean than is possible in a separate house, a distinct house. Do Edwin and Angelina choose a house in the suburbs, a villa with a tennis ground, gables, and a tradesmen's entrance, what check have they upon what happens in their absence? They pay sixty or seventy or eighty pounds a year, and about a third of that amount may be added for taxes; there is the expense of a gardener, even if it is no more than a day a fortnight, and a good deal of cost in travelling to and fro, and when they go up to town to a theatre or some other festivity, what check have they upon the house in their absence? Absolutely none. Whereas, in a flat the watchdog is always there; no one can come in or go out without the knowledge of the hall porter or his assistant.

But in this case, as in nearly all others, Edwin and Angelina should be guided first and foremost by their means. If they are not sufficiently well off to indulge themselves in a really convenient flat, they will be much wiser to look out for a house. I have known young couples whose passion for having a flat was such that they began their married life in a cellar! No, I am not joking, I am speaking the sober, earnest, downright truth! When I say a cellar, I mean a cellar, in which the entire domicile was well below the level of the street. I would rather myself live in the attics, and I have noticed during my peregrinations in one part or other of London town, that the occupants of these underground flats are very often changed. You will find these flats, when you look over them, fitted up and decorated precisely the same as those on the drawing-room floor; little lattice windows form part of the over-mantel decoration, the electric light sheds its radiance over the scene, electric bells form communication between the various rooms and the kitchen department; you will find deep skirtings, art decorations, dados, friezes and every other modern luxury, not forgetting an ample bath-room. But all the time there are certain drawbacks which, like the poor, will be always with you. First and foremost, the fact that, as you sit in your drawing-room, you can just see the feet of pedestrians in the streets, little boys can look straight into your rooms, and your friends—if they have no sense of decency—can make sure that you are at home before they enquire of your servant. They are always chill, are these underground flats, and they are always damp. You will burn twice as much gas or electric light and twice as many coals as your neighbour on the top story, and the rent usually runs about the same.

Then again, as to flat life. Don't, if you cannot afford more than forty or fifty pounds a year, think that you are going to get a flat for that sum in a good neighbourhood, for you cannot do it. I have known several young couples who started housekeeping in flats which were originally built for workmen's dwellings. They proved either too expensive or too uncongenial for those for whom they were originally intended. As a rule, the accommodation in these make-shift dwellings is extremely meagre; the drawbacks are appallingly plenteous, and the rents are considerable. I know several Edwins and Angelinas who, in order to gratify what I may call a passion for a flat, live seven stories up from the street. Let me remind all beginners in matrimony that it is a great test of friendship, and a very severe test of friendship, to expect to be remembered when you live at a height of seven stories from the front door. My dear readers, it means fourteen flights of stairs, fourteen flights of stairs of stone or slate, guiltless of carpet, devoid of resting places, chill and usually not a little dirty. And the reward when you get there? If you come unexpectedly it is not at all unlikely that Angelina may be out, that you may find the oak sported, so to speak—and in that case you go away, after shoving a card under the door, not knowing whether Angelina may not have been murdered by the Abigail. Or else an exceedingly untidy Abigail—Abigails in places seven stories up are always untidy—tells you with a grin that Missis is gone out and she *will* be vexed when she finds that you have called. She perhaps is good-natured enough to suggest your waiting awhile, but the certainty of Missis's return is very doubtful, and you turn and toil sadly down the fourteen flights of stairs again. So I say to all intending householders, think over the flat question before you decide on a house. But having decided on a flat, here is a golden rule. Be tempted by no flat future, however pleasant, unless there is a lift. If you can afford a flat with a lift, well and good; unless you can afford a flat with a lift, eschew flats.

Then we must think of those who have decided on a house. Well, for them I have also a golden rule, culled from a wide and somewhat bitter experience. Be your house large or small, in town or in country, by sea or by moor, in a village or in the depths of solitude, avoid it like the plague if it is old! No human beings, until they have lived in a really old house, know the inconveniences, the miseries, the curses which attend such a life. Of course, if you have

a very old mansion of your own, and you take out all the windows and put in modern ones, take out all the fire-places and put in slow combustion stoves, take up all the floors and replace them by boards which are, I believe, technically called "dowelled, tongued and rabbitted," re-drain in the most modern and approved style, re-roof, add bath and other conveniences and necessities, you may—I say you *may*, for it is by no means certain, but you *may*—have a house in which it is possible to live with a certain degree of comfort. But there is no certainty about it. I have lived myself in such a house, in which (on the surface) one had every convenience and comfort which money and modern skill could give. Alas! it was only on the surface! The drainage was a fraud, the draughts were as a cloud of witnesses, the roof leaked in every conceivable part, the modern and highly elaborate bath could only be used with hot water when the wind was in certain quarters!

My dear Edwin and Angelina in prospective, take my advice. Don't pitch your tent in an old house. There ought to be a law that all houses built a hundred years back should be razed to the ground; and I would even go further and have it decreed that no fresh domicile should be built upon the same ground until at least five years have gone by.

A few months ago I went over an old house which was in the last stage of picturesque decay and ruin. It was a mansion boasting of some twenty-four bedrooms, and had been used for fourteen or fifteen years as a boys' school. The possibilities from a decorative point of view, both of house and gardens were indisputable. It was picturesque, spacious, and romantic; it contained seven or eight reception rooms *en suite*, and there was a labyrinth of bedrooms upstairs as puzzling as a figure of the Kitchen Lancers. My friend and I wandered about this place for a couple of hours, for the caretaker was a good lady blessed with the cares and responsibilities of a large family, and allowed us to wander hither and thither at our own sweet will.

"I should take this for my bedroom," said my friend. "Oh, my gracious, I had no idea there were two steps there!" Then we wandered a little further on. "It would be so convenient to have a sitting-room—Oh, dear, I had no idea there was a step up there!" Then a little further on; "Dear me, why we are back in the same room again. I wonder whether I should ever find my way about!"

She, being a very energetic person, parcelled all the rooms out to the different members of the family and then went upstairs to see what were proudly described as "nine servants' bedrooms." Nine rabbit hutches; nine decaying, damp, loathly, smelling, dirty, dusty dog-holes! She just looked into them. "Why, not a servant would stay a week—I never saw such a place in my life! Oh, if the landlord will undertake to raise the roof and make nine decent bedrooms here, I might think of the house; but I couldn't ask any servant to sleep in such a room as this!"

Then we crawled down the narrow, tortuous, broken stairway again, and she looked upon the first floor apartments with a different eye. "They would want all new windows, my dear, and most of them new doors; all the fire-places must be renewed, and most of the floors, and everything would have to be re-papered and painted," she mused. "I don't think the place could be done up under a couple of thousand pounds—could it?" I need hardly say that my friend and the landlord did not come to terms.

So my advice to Edwin and Angelina is this, choose a house that is emphatically not old; also—because you know, my readers, I have always a great dread of toppling over on the other side—do not choose a house that is absolutely new, because if you do, you will rue the day, not sooner or later—but sooner. An excellent rule for house-takers is never to go into a new house unless it has been inhabited for at least twelve months. That gives some less wise person than yourself the task of drying its walls and of finding out all the bad points of the domicile. If a family has stayed in it from three to five years that is a circumstance not to its disadvantage; in my opinion however, from five to fifteen years is the very best age for a house.

Then there is another rule which should invariably be followed. It is: never take any house unless the papers absolutely satisfy you. It is just possible that you may find a house fully decorated and ready for immediate occupation in which the papers are absolutely to your taste; it is possible, but it is not probable. More especially is this the case with the drawing-room paper. Unless that is actually to her liking, Angelina will never love that drawing-room; she will never feel thoroughly at home and happy in it; it will never seem like her own. Any little addition, such as a paper, a bell, a cupboard, some small matter of comfort or convenience, do before you take possession, or ten

chances to one, you will never do it afterwards. I once knew an Angelina of a frugal turn of mind who, on launching out somewhat when going into a new house, said to her Edwin, "Well, really, Edwin, we are spending six hundred pounds in furniture, so I think we ought to make that drawing-room paper do for another year. It is a very handsome paper, though it doesn't suit my ideas, but we will have a yellow one later on." They never had a yellow paper. They put up their curtains of glorious gold-coloured brocade, which should have been the making of any room; they were killed by the cold whitey-grey paper. In vain did Angelina hunt from one part of furniture-land to another, in vain did she seek out warm browns, rich coppers, Indian reds, bright yellows, everything calculated to make a brilliant, harmonious, warm glow of colour in that superbly proportioned room. It was a hopeless task. That vile paper remained a standing reproach, clean, staring, blank, killing everything that the room contained. To this day Angelina looks back with regret to that house and to her own inestimable folly in being so frugal as not to sacrifice that paper. "If I had had a deep yellow paper," she said to me the other day, "my room would have been the handsomest yellow room in London. As it was, it was horrid; I never could sit in it. I liked everything in that house excepting the drawing-room. I felt myself a good-looking woman when I was anywhere else, but if ever I caught sight of myself in one of the looking-glasses in the drawing-room, I always saw that I was hideous."

Another hint for Edwin and Angelina. When you are making improvements do not put down tessellated doorsteps. Tessellated doorsteps are a joy to the eye when you don't know the people to whom the house belongs; to those who venture to ascend and descend them they are an abomination, and should be a sufficient cause for the breaking of any friendship! Another hint, lest I forget it in my next article on furniture. Don't beeswax your oilcloth; don't, in the name of friendship, in the name of love, in the name of pity, in the name of any mortal or heavenly quality you like, don't beeswax your oilcloth! I hardly know which of the two are most the criminal, beeswaxed oilcloth or tessellated doorsteps!

(To be continued.)

Later Days of Mozart.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD,

Author of "HAYDN," "MYSTERY OF CASTLE CROME," etc.; etc.

IN looking over the record of Mozart's life, we can but feel that his earlier days were more interesting than the later portion of his life. When a child, he had been the plaything of Court after Court, and this was not conducive to good habits. Could he only have been capable of steady application, as well as of splendid effort on occasion, we might have rejoiced in many more of his sublime works. His genius, however, so brilliantly and easily supplied his defects of regularity, that one can scarcely wonder at this. If he had developed more force and steadiness of character, he might have spent a happy life, instead of dying overcome with melancholy in the flower of his days.

On Mozart's return to Salzburg with his father in 1771, he found a letter desiring him in the name of the Empress Maria Theresa, to compose a cantata, for the marriage of the Archduke Ferdinand with the Princess of Modena. The Empress wished Hasse, her oldest composer, to write the opera, and her youngest to write the cantata. Mozart wrote his part in three weeks, and at the first rehearsal Hasse exclaimed, "This boy will throw us all into the shade." This prediction was justified by after events, for the serenade drew everyone's attention from the opera.

The Mozarts returned to Salzburg in December, and Wolfgang was commanded to compose—for the enthronization of the Archbishop—music, from the words of Metastasio: "The dream of Scipio." After this, Mozart went to Milan to compose "Sylla," according to promise. This was so popular that it ran for twenty-six successive nights. In the spring of 1773, Mozart returned to Salzburg, where he lived for the next two years, with an occasional visit to Munich and Vienna.

At nineteen years of age, Mozart's independent life may be said to have begun. Up to this time, he had been entirely under the control and influence of his father; but Leopold could no longer accompany his son on his different tours. It may be remembered he was *Maestro*

di Capella, and the Archbishop, already displeased at his long journeys and absences, threatened to dismiss him altogether. As this would have involved the loss of his income, Leopold very wisely resolved to stay at home. We may here remark that Nannerel—Mozart's beloved sister—gave up her musical career, and quietly retired into private life, devoting herself to the sacred duties of wife and mother. Very little more is known of her.

It was a bitter parting between Leopold and his son. Dissimilar as they were, they were peculiarly united, and the tie between them was very difficult to sever.

The Mozarts—father and mother—were noted for good looks, but Wolfgang did not share in this; he had no personal attractions beyond a wonderful play of expression when speaking. His health had always been delicate, and he had a peculiarly restless habit of playing with his hands, or beating with his feet upon the floor. He was passionately fond of billiards, and had a table in his own room, on which he played by himself when he had no companions.

In many respects, despite his splendid genius, Mozart was like a child. He never knew how to conduct himself; he was totally ignorant of the value of money, and eagerly caught at every passing pleasure. But this pale insignificant youth was like a different being when he sat down to play, his face lighted up, and his eyes looked like one inspired.

Leopold was full of forebodings at the thought of launching such a youth into the gay world of Paris, where he elected to take up his abode. There was a grand family consultation on the subject, and it was at last decided that his mother should accompany Wolfgang; so they set out for Paris in September, 1777, taking Munich on their way. In Paris they found their old friend, Herr Grimm, as kind and courteous as ever, though he was now Envoy and Baron, instead of being only a Commoner. This visit to Paris, however, proved almost as great a failure as the first had been a success. The Princess of Bourbon used to take great notice of Mozart when he was a little boy, and Grimm, anxious to do him a good turn, gave Wolfgang a letter of introduction to one of her ladies-in-waiting—the Duchess of Chabot.

About a week after this he was called upon to present himself. Of course he went at the time appointed, and his annoyance at his reception may be gathered from the following letter written to his father:

"I had to wait half-an-hour in a cold room, without fire or stove. At last the Duchess of Chabot came and asked me to play on a piano in the room. I said I willingly would play, but my fingers were so cold it was impossible, and entreated I might be taken into a warmer room. The only answer was "*Oui, Monsieur, vous avez raison.*" The Duchess then sat down, and motioned to some gentlemen to sit round a large table. They then all began to draw, while I sat waiting doing nothing. Windows and doors were open, so that I shivered with cold. They were all perfectly silent, and I began to wonder how long this cold and weariness would endure. Had it not been for the thought of Baron Grimm, I should have instantly departed. At last in despair, I sat down to the miserable pianoforte, and began to play : worst of all, no one listened ; they kept on drawing, and I played to walls, tables, and chairs. At length my patience quite gave way, I stopped in the middle of an air, stood up, and left it unfinished. Then were showered on me torrents of praises, but I only replied I could do nothing with this piano, I would play to them another day on a better instrument. I was however detained for another half-hour, until the Duke should arrive. But now the Duchess de Chabot sat by me and listened, and then I forgot cold, weariness, and the wretched piano, and played as I do when I am in good spirits and in the humour."

It may easily be imagined that Mozart did not relish this treatment. From being caressed and admired by everybody, he found himself now of little importance. In the same letter this remark occurs : "If I have the best piano in Europe to play upon, but people to hear me, who do not care for music, and do not feel with me when I am playing, all the pleasure is gone."

It must, however, in justice to the Parisians, be remarked that Mozart did not like the French, and was entirely unsuited to their ways. As a little child, with his precocious genius, he had been the darling of the Court, and was rewarded with bon-bons and kisses. Now, he was an awkward undergrown youth, with his brain teeming with grand and glorious melodies, and utterly deficient in grace or ease of manner. In a word, he was entirely out of place in the gay French Court of Marie Antoinette. The French language itself, while eminently suited for sparkling conversation, does not lend itself to music. Mozart was very bitter on the singing of the day. He said "the French howled and shrieked to a public with ears of horn."

Mozart attempted to give music lessons in Paris, but here again he was too impatient for success. He gave lessons to the daughter of the Duke of Guines—one of the noblesse—who was musical and played the flute well, while his young daughter accompanied him on the harp. He wished Mozart to teach his daughter composition; not to attempt anything grand, only to write simple airs for her instrument, as the Duke did for his. Accordingly Mozart commenced, and in four lessons he told Mademoiselle Guines that she “knew all the rules of harmony and had learned them very quickly.” The next day he set her to compose some variations to an easy minuet, himself marking the measure and time. The young lady replied “she could do no such thing, she did not even know how to begin.” Mozart then commenced for her, and told her rather sharply that she “must think, and follow out her ideas.” The poor girl sat and pondered for a quarter of an hour, and then declared she “had no ideas, nothing would come.” “Well then,” said Mozart, rising, “if you have no ideas, I certainly can’t give them to you,” and without a word of apology, he left the girl in despair. It is almost needless to add that he was never recalled.

When he wrote a description of all this to his father, the prudent Leopold, who knew the world so well was much annoyed, and suggested a very crooked line of policy to his son, which would have been impossible to the simple-minded, straightforward Mozart, who resolved to seek another sphere of labour. This incident relating to Mademoiselle Guines, was a type of the whole of his Paris life, every effort resulting in failure. Before finally leaving Paris, Mozart composed a symphony for the Concert Spirituel, and himself took part in its performance. It was a great success and indeed his only triumph at Paris.

This visit to France left marks in Mozart’s life never to be effaced. In 1778, his mother, whom he dearly loved, died suddenly, and he was overwhelmed with sorrow. Herr Grimm at this crisis proved himself the true friend he had always been: he took the sorrowing youth to his own hotel, and tried to soothe and comfort him. He was in a measure successful, but poor Mozart’s face was set towards his home and his father; and just about this time there was an opening for him in the service of the Archbishop, so he re-entered his native place in January, 1779, as Hof and Dom organist at Salzburg.

What a sad coming home this was for the proud ambitious Leopold. His wonderful son had failed in his Paris venture, and the beloved wife

of his youth, without a word of farewell, had passed away from him for ever.

We must now speak of a circumstance which, during his visit to Paris, had made Mozart more dreary and pre-occupied than ever. On his way thither he stayed at Manheim, and made the acquaintance of the Weber family, where there were several lovely girls. There was one especially beautiful girl, with whom he fell passionately in love. He was too young and too poor to think of marrying, but his devotion flattered the girl's vanity, and if she did not return his affection, she certainly encouraged him; she also shed a few tears at parting, which deepened Mozart's affection, and he went to Paris full of "Aloysia," and dreaming of little else. After his departure Mademoiselle Weber, who had a fine voice, went on the stage and became a popular actress. It can be easily understood that in the rush and excitement of her new life she had little thought for the awkward, gifted youth, who yet loved her so dearly. Poor Mozart, knowing nothing of this, and full of disappointment and sorrow, called at Manheim on his way home to be consoled by Aloysia. She, however, had gone to Munich, the Elector of Bavaria having summoned her to be prima donna in that city: Mozart followed, but the very first interview with her filled him with bitterness and chilled his love. The prima donna, cold and haughty, looked at him with the half closed eyes women affect when they mean to be cruel, and remarked "how strange it was, but she scarcely remembered him." Mozart looked at her, and felt that his dream was over. He was too proud to be dismissed, and made no scene, but quietly walked to the piano and sang in a clear voice—

"I willingly renounce the maid,
Who does not love me too."

In after years Mozart was revenged, for Aloysia married an actor named Lange, and the union was most unhappy. She lived to perform in some of the brilliant operas of her early lover, to hear his fame on all sides, and to bitterly repent of her coldness. It is very true that "many a heart is caught in the rebound." It was true in this case, for Constance Weber, one of the many sisters, took pity upon Mozart, and the pity was soon changed into love.

Constance was indeed a treasure, faithful and true, and Mozart soon grew to love her far more deeply than he had loved the faithless Aloysia. Some years elapsed before the two were able to marry, for

lack of means, but Constance was a spur to his efforts, and proved in the dark days that were to come a most tender and devoted wife.

All these experiences of life, love, sorrow, and bitter disappointment, widened Mozart's mental horizon, and happily for posterity, he did not remain the idol of Parisian Society. Out of the ashes of his dead hopes, out of his pains and sorrows, came the splendid development of his immortal genius. Had everything gone smoothly with Mozart, the world might never have been enriched by his "Zauberflöte," "Don Giovanni," "La Clemenza di Tito," and others.

Mozart's very faults gave expression to his music. A well balanced mind might never have risen to such heights of grandeur, nor sunk to such depths of sadness.

His first important opera was "Idomeneo," composed for the Elector of Bavaria, to be performed at Munich, the orchestra there being one of the best in Germany. Many of the airs were prompted by Constance Weber, and the whole opera was a great success. Old Leopold Mozart brought his daughter to hear it, and had the exquisite joy of seeing his son's splendid success. The old man confessed it was one of the happiest moments of his life, when he saw that son, whose baby fingers he had guided, whose infant compositions he had directed, in the full maturity of his power, and needing no longer his care. The thunders of applause were deafening and seemed almost more than Leopold could bear. He retired into private life soon after this, and only lived till May, 1787.

These triumphs at Munich made Wolfgang forget that he had exceeded the Archbishop's leave of absence, and he was startled to find himself peremptorily summoned to Vienna, where the Archbishop then was. He very reluctantly obeyed, and tried to live the life of an episcopal retainer, but found it simply insupportable. Etiquette and forms of any kind were always distasteful to Mozart, and he resolved on the very first opportunity to abandon his present life.

The opportunity soon came.

Prince Galetzin—a distinguished Russian—gave a concert and asked Mozart to perform. Instead of waiting for permission from the Archbishop, Wolfgang quietly walked past all the authorities straight to the Prince, quite unmindful of the amazed footmen and attendants, and the group of musicians in the corner, waiting for their leaves and orders. This so offended the Archbishop that he declared Mozart should not play at all. He did play, however, at

the concert, and gave up his appointment. For this, Mozart was never forgiven, and sad to say, the Archbishop in after days extended his wrath to his poor widow and orphans.

Wolfgang stayed on now at Vienna and lived a life just suited to his mind. The beautiful situation of Vienna, the lovely scenery the grand rolling Danube, fired his imagination, and sympathy and congenial society, warmed his heart. Vienna, too, was the abode of Haydn, Glück and Clementi. It also boasted a good Italian Opera House, with a fine orchestra and singers, and Metastasio for a poet. This was the birthplace of some of Mozart's finest works, although he wore himself out by entering eagerly into the pleasures of the Austrian capital by day, and having fits of despondency at night.

In 1783, after some objections from both fathers, Mozart married Constance Weber and brought her to Vienna. She was a very delicate girl, and it was touching to see the far-famed but awkward Mozart, sometimes nursing his wife with the tenderest care.

When his first little son was born, Mozart was so enchanted that he vowed to write a mass if the child and mother recovered. As soon as they were able to move, he took them to Salzburg, and showed his old father the baby of whom he was so proud. Leopold was overjoyed to see his gifted son after two years absence, with the grandchild of his old age. Mozart did not forget the mass in his intense joy; it was composed during his tour and performed for the first time in St. Petersburg, where he was held in honour by the great dukes of the North, who had heard him at Vienna.

After a visit of three months to Salzburg, Mozart returned to his adopted home, and soon after this the great violin player, Signora Strinassacchi came to Vienna, and wished Mozart to play with her at her own concert, asking him to compose duets for piano and violin, he taking the piano. Mozart reluctantly consented, for he thought this was mere waste of time, and, with his usual procrastination, he kept putting off the composition from day to day. At last, the day before the concert, he wrote the violin part and gave it to the lady. She however was much annoyed because he never attended the rehearsals and did not even send her the score. Still, there was nothing to do but to wait, and trust Mozart, and she did not trust in vain.

He had not found a minute in which to write his part; it was all composed and played from memory, and was a most brilliant success. The Emperor Joseph was present, and seeing nothing but a blank

piece of paper before Mozart, he said to him at the conclusion of the concert:

"Where was your part?"

"Here, your Majesty," replied the great composer, touching his forehead.

"What! has it again come to this?"

"Yes, your Majesty, but not a single note fell under the desk."

It was sometimes a habit of Mozart, literally, to compose his part at the moment of performance. This particular Sonata must have been written down afterwards, as it has been performed at St. James's Hall, and called "The Strinassacchi Sonata."

In the year 1785, Leopold Mozart came to Vienna to visit his son, just in time to hear the first performance of the six quartettes, written by Wolfgang and dedicated to Haydn. Mozart lavished great and unusual labour upon these pieces, and he well deserved the rapturous applause which greeted their performance.

At the close, Haydn, who was present, turned to Leopold and said: "I declare to you, before God and my honour, I regard your son as the greatest composer I ever heard of." The friendship between these two masters was very touching and delightful.

A professor at Vienna and an opponent of Haydn, thinking to please Mozart, pretended to point out some trifling inaccuracies which he said he had discovered in Haydn's works.

"Sir," said Mozart sharply, "if you and I were both melted down, there would not be enough material to make one Haydn."

He also admired Handel extremely, and often said: "Handel knows best of us all, what is capable of producing a great effect. When he chooses he strikes like the thunder-bolt."

Mozart's life and habits were so irregular, one never knew what his day might be. Sometimes he would be seized with a musical inspiration, and then he would go on composing even in the presence of his friends, and nothing would draw him from it. He has been known to pass whole nights with the pen in his hand, and at other times he would do nothing except under the spur of immediate necessity. An instance of his extraordinary powers under pressure may be found in the overture to "Don Giovanni"—by some considered his best. It was only composed the night before the first representation—the general rehearsal being over. About eleven o'clock he asked his wife to make him some punch, and keep him awake. The sweet, patient

wife did her very best, she told him fairy stories, and odd strange tales while he composed. But, as might have been expected, punch and bodily fatigue combined, made him so sleepy that at last his wife suggested that he should sleep an hour and she would wake him at the expiration of that time. He slept profoundly, and his anxious wife sat patiently by his side, watching the lines of care and thought gradually disappearing from his face, until the clocks in Vienna struck five, then she gently and reluctantly awoke her exhausted husband; he rose up refreshed and strengthened, and finished the overture in two hours!

Mozart made several journeys to Prague, Berlin and Dresden. At Berlin the King offered him a good appointment at Court, to direct the orchestra. Mozart only replied, "Shall I leave my good Emperor?" A friend told him he ought to have closed with the King's offer, as he had no regular salary. Mozart replied "I am fond of Vienna, the Emperor treats me kindly, and I care little about money."

After this the Austrian Emperor did give him a hundred pounds per annum and called him "private composer to the Court." Speaking of this to a friend, Mozart said "It is too much for what I have done, and too little for what I could have done."

In money matters Mozart was always too generous, too profuse. Music-sellers and theatre managers made fortunes by his works, while he died miserably poor. The most celebrated of his operas were "*Le Nozze di Figaro*" and "*Don Giovanni*," both composed in 1787. "*Così par tutte*," a comic opera, 1790, and "*La Clemenza di Tito*" and "*Zauberflöte*," in 1791.

Dr. Burney says of Mozart in 1789:—"Mozart, who astonished all Europe by his wonderful talents during infancy, is now no less the wonder of the musical world, for his fertility and knowledge as a composer."

Mozart left behind him a vast number of instrumental pieces of all kinds. He composed many grand masses for the Archbishop of Salzburg, but he was cramped by reason of the restrictions laid upon him, and genius cannot bear any fetters. The Elector of Bavaria, however, gave him an order for an effortorium, and here he was free, and the result was a work of exquisite beauty; the words were:—

"Misericordias Domini
Cantabo in æternum."

The Elector was delighted with it, and the Court and Country rang with its author's praises, while at the time he was only a paid Episcopal retainer. But certainly the grandest and most wonderful of Mozart's ecclesiastical works was the "Requiem," a solemn mass (in D minor) for the burial of the dead.

It does not appear that Mozart felt the pressure of poverty keenly until the death of the Emperor Joseph II, in 1790. After this event difficulties crowded thickly around him. To make matters worse, his health, always delicate, began rapidly to decline, and on account of the pressure of poverty he undertook more work than his failing strength would bear. "Zauberflöte" he took especial pains with, polishing it with the last touches of genius, sometimes sitting up the greater part of the night, and often fainting over it. He grew strangely depressed also, for he felt that life was nearly over and his work not yet done, for his brain was teeming with unwritten melodies. This thought threw a feverish activity into his compositions and helped to burn out the lamp of life more quickly. It was unutterably sad for Constance to see her beloved husband fading away before her eyes, and yet be powerless to save. Even she, however, did not know how deeply seated was his malady. He was really a dying man, while he was walking about among his family and his friends, and still composing. He had two operas in hand at the same time, "Zauberflöte" and "La Clemenza di Tito," both of which he laboured to bring to the highest pitch of beauty and finish.

The opera of "La Clemenza di Tito" was ordered to be performed at Prague, on the occasion of the marriage of the Emperor Leopold. Mozart was much pleased with this commission, and laboured earnestly at it, even in his hours of weakness and suffering. He went to Prague to hear the opera performed—the last journey he ever took. "La Clemenza" was a most brilliant success, and although Mozart suffered much on this journey, fame and sympathy cheered him.

On his return from Prague he sank into deep despondency.

There is a curious story told, that about this time, a strange looking person, wrapped in a black cloak, appeared three times to Mozart, and desired him to write a Requiem. We believe the simple facts are these. Mozart received a letter from an anonymous writer, asking him to compose a Requiem for a person of distinction, who did not wish his name to appear. He showed his wife the letter and said the work would be most congenial to him, feeling in his heart that it would be

his own funeral dirge. He did not finish the Requiem as soon as was expected, and a messenger was sent to hasten him with his work for the "unknown." Mozart's autograph letter, written in Italian, replying to this, is, or was, in the collection of Mr. Young.

TRANSLATION.

Most Honored Sir,—I would follow your advice, but know not how; my heart is troubled and I can scarcely compose, yet I cannot get from sight the figure of this "unknown." I see him perpetually; he requests, solicits, importunes me for the Requiem. I continue, because composing fatigues me less than repose. Besides, I have no longer anything to fear.

I know by my own feelings that the hour approaches when I must breathe my last. Yet life has been sweet, and my career opened before me under such fortunate auspices. But we cannot change our destiny. No one measures his own days. We must therefore be resigned. What Providence ordains will be accomplished. And now I conclude. The Requiem will be my funeral dirge, and I must not leave it unfinished.

VIENNA, *September*, 1791.

MOZART.

Mozart's visit to Prague was a brilliant victory, and he received quite an ovation on his return to Vienna. Here he devoted himself night and day to the Requiem. Night and day he worked as far as his failing strength would allow, and with an ever-increasing excitement. He often fainted while composing it, and his poor wife, who could bear it no longer, entreated him not to work so hard at the Requiem, and asked him why he was so anxious to finish it.

"Because," he replied solemnly, "it is for myself; I shall soon need it."

Constance, who could no longer restrain herself, fell into a burst of passionate and bitter weeping, and hastily summoning a physician, she had the comfort of hearing him order Mozart to write no more. This mandate he pretended to obey, but by snatches, in secret moments, he finished the Requiem, and felt that his work on earth was done. Then he lay silent and exhausted on his bed, the faithful Constance ever watching beside, marking every change in the beloved face, and trying to soothe and comfort him. One evening, as he lay sad and weary, a sound of joyous triumph rent the air. It was the burst of delight and admiration over "*Zauberflöte*," then being performed

for the first time. Everyone rushed to hear it, the theatre was full to overflowing; Vienna seemed mad with excitement, and this joyous triumph was echoed through the length and breadth of Germany. Alas! the composer's life was ebbing fast away; he just roused himself to know what was passing, and to say "It is all over with me for ever." As he lay sinking from exhaustion in the spring-time of his career, tribute after tribute came to his dying bed.

He was appointed Kapellmeister to the Cathedral at Vienna, a post he had always desired. Presburg and Amsterdam sent him "honors," with the earnest entreaty that he would make their cities his home.

His bed was strewn with letters of congratulation and offers of brilliant employment. He roused up for a time and sadly said:

"Must I die! just as I could live happily? I must leave my wife and children just as I could have provided for them! Was I not right in saying the 'Requiem' will be for me?" Mozart lingered for a fortnight after this, and when he felt his last hour approaching he called for Sophia, a favourite sister-in-law, and said, "It is well you are here, to see me die." Then he tenderly took leave of his wife, and seeing the sheets of the "Requiem" scattered over the bed, he said, "I feel this is death: who will now provide for my Constance?"

Soon, cold shuddering came on, speech passed away, and with one tender pressure of his wife's hand, he breathed his last, on the evening of the 5th of December, 1791.

As soon as his death was known at Prague, a grand musical ceremony was ordered to his memory. Thousands thronged to hear it. The bells of the city tolled for half-an-hour. An orchestra of one hundred and twenty voices sung and performed a mass to his memory. Tears were shed, flowers and wreaths brought, every possible honour paid to the departed musician.

But at the very time all this was going on, Mozart's broken-hearted wife was bending over his coffin, looking her last at the dear face, now sealed with the majesty of death, and feeling bitterly that she had not enough money for his interment, not even to buy him a grave, a *perpetuité*. Alas! then, for human fame!

Getting Me into Shape.

By CAPTAIN WILLING.

IT was my cousin Muriel said she would do it; of course it was very kind of her, particularly as she had never taken any notice of me until quite lately—

“You will want a good deal of trimming,” she said, motioning me to sit down on the “vicarage” suite sofa in the drawing-room of No. 40 West Kensington Square; of course the house was not really hers, it was my uncle’s, who was father to her and all the rest of the girls. He was, besides being master of 40 West Kensington Square, head partner in Halket, Brown and Smoks, of Cheapside, Pork—no, Muriel does not like that word—Provision Merchant—that’s better. “Something in the City,” Muriel says is best of all—and Cheapside is not very far from the City, is it?

Well, I sat down on the vicarage sofa; it was not comfortable but it did not break, and then Muriel put back her head on a red muslin cushion, that crackled, and looked graceful. Muriel, I mean, not the cushion. She says herself she would be a great acquisition to the stage. After she had been looking graceful some moments, she looked at me.

“I will do my best for you,” she said kindly. “You have a lot to learn. In some ways of course. I could teach you better if I were married.”

“Perhaps your husband might object.”

“Oh, as for that”—I don’t know if she meant to call him “that,” but she laughed a little as if it were of no consequence.

“What are the reasons it is better you are not married,” I asked, but my cousin looked so roguish that I hastily continued—

“What have I got to learn?”

“What a lot of whats,” very crossly. “Well, of course you know about having your hair long in the front, and parted, and about putting your hands in your pockets when you are introduced to a girl. You must never wear a button-hole, and always have a handkerchief inside your white waistcoat at night for ornament—you must never use it. You must know the names of all actresses

and give them nick-names—even if you never speak to one. You must have a favourite author, like Zola, or perhaps Mallock would do, and learn little sentences out of their books."

"I think I'll learn Mallock," I said mildly, "you see I don't speak French."

"Oh, Zola is translated," consolingly, "and Zola is the nastiest, so you will remember him easier!" she added.

I don't know if I was quite prepared to agree to that, when the door was opened by means of a hearty thump, and my youngest cousin rushed in.

"Oh, you are here, are you," she remarked, and I quickly perceived she was out of temper.

"What is the matter, Nellie?" I asked.

She is not of consequence like Muriel, in fact she is almost of no consequence, being the youngest. Before Muriel cared to shape me, it was with her I was chums; she and I made almond rock and toast together in the schoolroom and burnt our fingers together. Nellie is not pretty—she is short and fat, but she has nice red hair that curls, and a dimple in her chin, and when her temper is all right, the jolliest laugh in the world.

She did not laugh now—she looked disdainful—only it's not a good look when you are short and fat, and have dimples.

"I'm coming to you the moment Muriel has done with me, and I don't think she will be long now," I said, but somehow that speech pleased neither sister.

"Oh, pray go directly, if you wish," said Muriel haughtily—and she could look haughty.

"I'm sure I don't want Muriel's leavings," cried Nellie vulgarly, with cheeks that matched her hair, and she dashed out of the room even more noisily than she had entered, causing all the little shepherds and shepherdesses, and their attendant dogs and elephants—there is quite a Noah's ark on the green plush mantelpiece at No. 40—to start and tremble, and all the fans and umbrellas on the walls to wave and sigh, while the petticoated flower pots on the floor, and the enamelled ones on the oak brackets joined in a musical chorus.

When the commotion had a little subsided, Muriel motioned me to sit down again, with the evident intention of resuming her lecture. But I felt I really had had enough for one day—I think I should have

liked to have run after Nellie, and made it up, and had tea in the schoolroom—but of course that was not to be thought of—it might vex Muriel, and really Muriel is so kind.

"Come out," I said with happy inspiration. "We will take a 'bus to Bond Street, and I'll stand you tea at the 'Kettle Drum.'"

My cousin was gracious—we had a superb and muffiny tea—but we went down to Bond Street in a hansom—not in a 'bus. I'm not really stingy, only I never thought of it. You see it's not long since my mother's cousin died, and left me that money.

* * * *

After that tea Muriel and I got on wonderfully. She took me to a tailor's, recommended to her by a man—she told me never to use the word "gentleman"—whom she could thoroughly trust, for he—the man, not the tailor—had been made a bankrupt all on account of his clothes.

She had me rigged out in a "town coat," that made me think I had on a girl's dress skirt. On Saturday afternoons she liked to go to tea at Richmond, so I got up in neat dittos, like a groom, and on Sundays I blazed on the river in a coat that made me thankful to look at my white flannel legs, to get the dazzle out of my eyes. She was kind enough to have a tailor gown "built" for herself, which she said was my taste. I was glad of that, for it was nice—it was also expensive. We went to theatres sometimes. My collar always prevented me seeing anything, I felt too much.

* * * *

We were at a large crush—Muriel called it that, and it was. It was at 500 Gloucester Place, Hyde Park. I have no doubt that the people who inhabit Gloucester Place are law-abiding christians, but if you were to call Gloucester Place, Bayswater, they would be law-abiding no longer. Well, it was very hot, and of course, too full of women, and furniture, and flowers, and scent.

The lady of the house had just finished playing the "Turkish Patrol" very well, and the husband had said "thank you, darling," and his relations—he had a great many, and they were of the poorer kind—all said "how sweet it is to see so devoted a husband!" Muriel saw an opportunity, and kindly introduced me—"Mrs. Taylor Perkins—Mr. James Smith."

"Like London?" said Mrs. Taylor Perkins, putting her golden

head on one side to prevent the hair being ruffled off by a giantess in sleeves who was passing.

"Not much," I replied, getting out of the way of a hat pin that threatened my eyes.

"Ah!" said my hostess vaguely, trying to peer at the door through the crowd, "I love the quiet of the country—pardon, but I see Miss Lottie Kickup at the door, how good of her to come"—and she rushed forward to greet the noisiest music-hall singer I have had the pleasure of hearing.

* * * *

"Come down and have our tea, Nellie," I whispered softly; you might have heard a pin drop, so I had to whisper softly.

Miss Kickup had, after much handshaking, consented to sing the "Girl on the Rantan"—and Mrs. Taylor Perkins' "at home" was a made thing, to be especially picked out in ladies' papers and chronicled in the *Court Journal*.

We stole down into the deserted tea-room; even the maids and the greengrocer—I mean the announcing butler—had stolen to the foot of the stairs to catch what they could of "On the Rantan."

"It's cooler here, is it not, Nell? Sit down!" Nell sat down; she had on a blue crepon frock, and her hat was white, and large.

"I'm glad you came."

"Why? I don't see what it matters to you," Nell answered between little spoonfuls of ice, "Muriel is here, and I hate this sort of thing."

"So do I."

"So don't you?" she retorted; "you like to be 'up-to-date' and 'in it,' and you think just because we are born at the end, instead of the beginning of a century, we are very wonderful and different from other people, and Muriel tells you 'to find study in the personality of the modern girl,' just as if she won't be an ancient one in a few years." Nell put down her ice in the excitement.

"And you: I did think you were not so foolish as to fancy you ever could be this sort of person," and she vaguely pointed round at the tea and coffee cups.

"Don't be cross, I don't think I want to. I think some of Muriel's friends awful."

"Not at all, they are quite all right, and Muriel is quite too modern for anything."

"You are more modern than Muriel."

"Oh, no, I am not. I am only young."

"Well, so am I for that matter. Don't let us fight, Nellie."

"I have a good mind to chuck all this and go back to the farm; after all it's what I'm fit for!"

I stopped staring at Nell; somehow she seemed a different girl to me, not my little cousin to be teased and played with, and chaffed, but a sweet dear womanly girl who could make all my life different if—from upstairs comes the sound of much clapping, though it is from gloved hands, then—

"Encore! Do, Miss Kickup, if you could. Oh, how quite too awfully kind," and then, "When he first saw my Back Hair down," came the shrill unmusical soprano.

"Nellie," I caught my cousin's hands, "if I go home to the farm, will you come with me? Will you marry me?" I don't suppose it was a "modish" way to ask her.

"I don't know about that," said Nell, and, snatching her hands away, "Besides Muriel wants you."

"No, Muriel would not have me."

"Have you asked her?" very quickly.

"No, of course not."

"Let go my hands, someone is coming. Listen, there they are, clapping again."

Down the stairs comes the rustle of silk petticoats. The voice of the "Only Man," as Miss Corelli calls him, only in this case he is multiplied, rises upward joyfully.

"When first I saw her back hair down
It fell in waves of darkest brown;
When next I did those locks behold,
They all had turned to brightest gold;
But whether her hair is dark or fair,
She's quite the girl for me.

Up-to-date and smart,
The tarest little tart—
Quite the girl for me."

sang Miss Kickup, taking up the chorus as she walked into the room with her admiring hostess.

"Quite the girl for me," I whispered to Nellie who tried to look angry, but her good natured face was not up to it.

That evening I announced our engagement to Muriel. She has always been so kind, yet somehow I felt—well, not afraid of her, but not comfortable. She certainly took it very oddly. She stood up, pointed her finger at me, and laughed in a manner that, if it had not been Muriel, I should have considered most unladylike.

I told Nell; she said we were not a bit engaged, for she had never accepted me; but I am not going to let a trifle like that stand in the way of my happiness.

Running after Shadows.

IN THREE PARTS.

BY FERRIERA.

CHAPTER IV. (*continued*).

A MERE COINCIDENCE.

BUT we did have long to wait. Three days elapsed with no result, though Jensen spent hours each night in watching the cottage. Giles passed his time in perambulating the country, sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, but he seemed as unsuccessful as Jensen in his search for data. They were on the best of terms, but each remained equally convinced of the ultimate success of his own method.

Ned and I watched their separate pursuits, and inquired into the results with keen interest, and a slight touch of amusement, though a boding sense of misfortune, which we could not shake off, served to keep our lighter feelings in check. Nothing more had been seen of Harding, until one morning Bales announced at breakfast that "that man Harding was back at the forge." I had a great desire to behold the man whom Ned described as such a suspicious looking character, and as Jensen had not yet seen him we both started off after breakfast, presumably to take a stroll in the direction of the forge, but in reality to get a look at the blacksmith's brother-in-law. Giles said he meant to read the paper, but would follow presently, "when we had satisfied our curiosity, and were tired of staring at an unfortunate countryman."

On our way down the village I enquired of Jensen if Ned had given him any idea of Harding's general appearance.

"Oh, a red-haired, bull-necked man," Mr. Blaine said, "the typical villain in fact. It's a fortunate thing for us, that neither you nor I were born with red hair and a thick neck, Mr. Brooke, or we might have been hung by this time," and the detective laughed lightly. "There he is though, and, by Jove, he's no beauty," he added, as we approached the forge and saw a man leaning against a low stone wall.

I had no difficulty in recognising him, as I make no doubt my readers have already done. He was none other than the hero of our late encounter in the railway carriage.

"Stay where you are," I cried to Jensen, and turning quickly I raced back to the Rectory. I burst into the dining-room, startling Giles so that he almost swallowed his cigar, and shouted to him to come along. He followed me without a word, until we reached the place where I had left Jensen. He was still standing there with the same look of surprise on his face which it had borne when I bolted off. I paid no attention to him, but catching Giles by the arm I pointed to the figure of Harding.

Giles knew him directly, as was manifest by a slight start, and the man appeared to recognise us at the same moment, for with a deep scowl he turned away and disappeared into the smithy.

"Well," said I eagerly to Giles, "what do you think of that?"

He hesitated a moment before answering, and then said, "Merely a curious coincidence," and I felt almost angry with him for his coolness.

In a few words I related to Jensen our adventure with the man in the train, and our identification of that "smoking beast," as Giles had called him, with Harding, at which the detective showed considerable interest.

"It all tends to prove," said he "that we shall not have very far to look for our quarry, when the time comes. I am convinced from my late observation that there is some fresh villainy hatching, but something is acting as a check upon the plotters and delaying their movements. I fear they have got wind of my true character."

As we were walking back Giles betrayed that he thought more of the late coincidence than he was willing to admit, by saying suddenly,

"He ought not to have seen us. It was a mistake."

"Ah!" said Jensen quietly, "Mr. Brooke is not a born detective." Somehow my enthusiasm seemed damped for awhile.

* * * *

The following morning we were all seated at breakfast, with the exception of Jensen, who had not yet put in an appearance, when a fly drove up to the front door. Just as we were wondering who it could be at this early hour, the door of the breakfast-room flew open and Marjory ran in. The next moment her arms were round her husband's neck.

"Oh! Ned, Ned, I am so glad to see you. I couldn't bear to leave you alone any longer, and I am so much better, you can't think. I knew we should surprise you this morning; we travelled all night because I thought baby would sleep better through the journey." Then for the first time catching sight of us she came forward and shook us warmly by both hands. "Oh, you dear, good boys to come and cheer him up—and just at this troublesome time too. But you must see your godson, Giles; he is so well. Nurse, bring in baby. How are you, Bales?"

Nurse (an old acquaintance of ours) was in the hall, ordering about men and boxes like a very despot, but she came in with smiling face to show the baby to its godpapa.

Giles was not one of those born fools who betray exactly what they are by grinning, blushing, and gibbering, in fact making a general idiot of themselves, when a baby is presented for their admiration. Neither was he one of those unfortunates who, in their nervous anxiety to say the right thing at the right moment, on hearing, as they suppose, the inevitable smiling nurse's knock on the door, exclaim almost before it opens: "Oh! how like it's dear papa!" and discover, to their chagrin, that the knock has heralded the advent of the footman with the coalscuttle. On the contrary, Giles took the child in his arms, with a nod and a kind word of greeting to old Nurse.

"Ain't he a beauty, Mr. Giles?" said she.

He was indeed a lovely child of about six months old, and as Giles held him in his arms for a moment, a little apart from the rest, I saw his eyes glisten with a sudden emotion which he tried to subdue. Giles had had his love affair like other men and it had ended sadly, through no fault of his, and I think sometimes the sight of other people glorying in their children would call up painfully what his own life might have been.

"Now, Giles, let baby go," Marjory broke in, "and come to breakfast, I am half starved. Where is Mr. Jensen? He quite fell in love with baby before I carried him off to Norfolk."

"Jensen is sure to be in soon," said Giles, as we sat down, the baby having been consigned once more to the tender mercies of its nurse.

"When am I to begin teaching little Giles to shoot, Marjory?"

She gave a bright rippling laugh, "Oh, you dreadful boy. If you are only going to teach my little darling to kill poor innocent creatures, the less you see of him the better, sir!"

This of course elicited a response from Giles, and in such light talk the meal passed cheerfully.

About nine o'clock Jensen came in. He started and frowned when he caught sight of Marjory, though immediately afterwards he came forward and greeted her cordially, enquiring after the baby with an air of genuine interest, which struck me as so incongruous in an officer of the law, that I almost burst out laughing, though I liked him the better for it. As he took his place beside me I heard him mutter, "I'd have given anything this should not have happened," and his words rendered me vaguely uneasy, though at the time I tried to dismiss them from my mind.

CHAPTER V.

COMING TO THE POINT.

THE two following days passed pleasantly by. Only those who have experienced it can enter into the joy felt by old friends in their reunion after a long separation. For some time we merely sat about on different chairs and smiled at one another, and Ned came in at intervals to seat himself upon something hard (usually the table) and smile at all three of us. Then by and bye, as this occupation began to pall, our tongues were unloosened, and once started off there was no stopping us. Ned declared that it was something frightful, and that the place was like a parrot house, but he talked as fast as any one of us. We spoke chiefly of the bygone days when Marjory used to come and stay with us at the old home in Dorsetshire, and was to us like one of our own sisters. And then our thoughts travelled on to the later college days when we used frequently to bring Ned home

for a part of the vacation, and were wont to quiz Marjory about her preference for "handsome Ned Blaine." Ah, dear, those happy days! What a change since then! My father's death had broken sadly into the old home life, and things could never be again as they once were. Ah, dear, those happy days!

And yet is it wise to repine because our childhood's happiness, our youthful joys, can never be recalled? Nay, we ought rather to feel grateful that we have those happy memories to look back upon. Those bright, unclouded days, replete with love and innocent enjoyment, have made a chapter in our lives, the memory of which will cling to us for all time.

We found much to talk about in these few days. Memories of the old home life, with its joys and sorrows, its thousand and one little incidents and adventures which so impress themselves upon the childish mind, these formed the staple of our conversation. Marjory was one of the home party, a true link with the old life, and so was thoroughly in touch with all our thoughts and feelings.

It seemed to be doing Giles good thus to be living over again the passed years, and I was glad to notice that it was so, for of late I had fancied him somewhat out of spirits.

But no one could long be dull in the same house with Marjory, and by degrees Giles' spirits began to recover their tone, and his flashes of humour and harmless ridicule to break forth as of old beneath the warmth and sunshine of her presence. Even Jensen's solemn visage grew less ominous in expression as he met her eye, and he would defend himself with spirit when she quizzed him over his unsuccessful efforts at man catching.

But events soon transpired which turned our thoughts into less agreeable channels.

It was the evening of the third day after Marjory's return, and we were all together in the dining room, having just disposed of dessert, when the servant brought in a note, which she handed to Ned.

The detective, it should be said, had been pursuing his usual quiet tactics during the last three days, looking about for clues which he never seemed to find, and watching the cottage, in which we assisted him. However, nothing had come of it, and Giles grew every day more sceptical on the subject of Jensen's methods of procedure, though his own perambulations were equally unavailing. Suddenly we were startled by an exclamation from Ned. He was

staring at the note in his hand with an expression half-startled, half-bewildered. Having perused it a second time, he handed it to Jensen, with the words, "read it aloud."

Jensen at once complied with his injunction, and read as follows :

"REV^d. SUR,

If you doant send back that detektiv to where he come from termorrer morning, it will be the wurs for him and you.

FROM ONE WHO DOANT STIK AT TRIFULS."

There was silence in the room, which was presently broken by the detective commencing to rub his hands gently together.

"We're drawing them at last," he exclaimed in tones indicative of the utmost satisfaction. "I knew we should if we only waited a bit. Now they are going to try something desperate, and we shall have them right enough."

"Certainly this is coming to the point," said Giles, with a greater show of interest than he had hitherto manifested. "What do you propose doing next?" said he, turning to Jensen.

"Wait," returned that cautious individual, "wait. It will not be long now before we have them."

Giles shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "I am for going and overhauling that cottage at once. If we break up their rendezvous (with a sarcastic emphasis upon the last word) they will all decamp."

"No, sir," said Jensen, "after all the time and trouble I have spent down here, I mean to catch the *men*. We have but to wait until the next robbery is committed, and then drop on them as they are stowing away their booty in that cottage."

"If they take it there," said Giles.

"Yes, sir, if they take it there; and they will do so, if my observations and experience are good for anything."

"We shall see," said Giles.

"Yes, Mr. Ferney, we *shall* see," returned the detective, for the first time slightly ruffled by the other's tone. And in the meantime," said he, turning to Blaine, "with your leave, sir, I will keep this letter."

"Certainly," said Ned, and there the matter ended for the moment. Later in the evening I caught Jensen subjecting the letter to another severe scrutiny. "What do you make of it?" said I.

"Why, that it's an obviously 'got up' affair," said he. "The man who could spell 'detective' in that way would never have put the 'h' into 'where.'"

For some time after the receipt of that letter affairs remained very quiet, though as times drew on Jensen seemed to become more and more interested in his pursuit, and one night he confided to me that he felt sure some new outrage was on the brink of operation, and that we might expect at any moment now to be called upon to assist him in capturing the gang. I, of course, manifested the desired amount of interest at the information, though I could not help feeling somewhat doubtful as to the result of his operations. The length of time which had elapsed since his first arrival at Ley, without any apparent discoveries, had aroused doubts in my mind as to his abilities. Subsequent events proved that I did him an injustice.

Now, I am well aware that, in writing this story, I have laid myself open to much criticism, and possibly to some contempt, for making a quiet country village in civilized England the scene of diabolical crimes and outrages more befitting the last century than the present peaceful times.

I embrace, therefore, the opportunity afforded by this small break in my chain of events, to endeavour to refute beforehand the inevitable disparagements which must arise, should my tale ever come before the world; and this I do, not merely from a wish to shield myself from the gibes and criticisms to which every author has in a measure to become hardened, but also from a desire to attach to my story a peculiar interest apart from its merit (if it have any) as a work of fiction; an interest hinging upon the fact that the story, though in itself imaginary, is nevertheless based upon circumstances and events in real life. These things, occurring as they have done in a part of the world well known to me (it was at one time my home), first gave rise to the ambition of authorship within me.

What I am particularly desirous of drawing people's attention to, is the fact, that in the present state of refined civilization, and within the radius of a large cathedral centre, a state of things exists, which, as I said before, is more characteristic of the last, than of the present century.

There are parts of the road about the neighbourhood I have endeavoured to describe, along which no woman will travel after dark without a man to attend her.

Various have been the outrages committed, even during the last few years, and often will the postman, as he delivers the letters in the morning, have a tale to tell of some new villainy perpetrated in the dark watches of the night, along those bleak stretches of roadway, the vagabond's market, where a policeman is regarded as a strange and uncouth being, and a beggar as a sort of licensed highwayman, to be avoided as a leper would be in the East. That this condition of things does exist I am well able to certify, and sometimes when I see the numberless units of the police force patrolling our great metropolis, and above all, the suburban thoroughfares, and note the order and regularity of all things, it strikes me with a sense of irony that such wild doings should still be going on not seventy miles away.

"I am jolly glad of it, it's like the good old times," I think I hear some youngster say. Ah! my lad! Wait until you have been obliged, as I was at your age, to walk for miles along those silent roads after nightfall, with all the tales you ever heard concerning them crowding upon your excited fancy, until you see a man crouching behind each bush, and your heart jumps into your mouth, as a cow puts her head over the hedge to peer at you. Or wait until two of your sisters are waylaid (as two girls once were to my certain knowledge), stripped of nearly every particle of clothing, and obliged to walk almost naked to the nearest town; then, my young friend, let us have the benefit of your opinion again, if you will, and I think that we shall find it slightly modified.

Begging the reader's forbearance for this brief digression, I now resume the thread of my narrative.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVE GETS THE SACK.

WHAT instinct is it that warns us of the approach of danger when, to all outward appearance, our fears are groundless? It is no reasonable suspicion, nothing definite, nothing tangible, merely a subtle apprehension, apparently without reason of any kind. And yet, such as it is, we cannot shake it off. It is perhaps a form of that powerful instinct which influences alike both man and brute,

the instinct of self-preservation. This influence is so strong that we are conscious of it at times even when the danger is itself invisible.

Animals are peculiarly susceptible to this form of second sight. With a dog, it usually has the effect of rendering him fidgety and uneasy, a state of things for which he seems himself unable to account. Eventually he will rise, and, if indoors, will leave the house and go and "nose around" for a bit outside. Now it is very odd, and even ludicrous, but it produces very much the same effect upon a man.

The afternoon of the day subsequent to Jensen's little burst of confidence to me on the subject of the "gang," as he termed them, found Giles and me together in the library smoking, Ned and his wife being out on a round of calls.

"Giles," said I, "I feel as if something were going to happen."

"Do you, old chap? That's odd. I've been feeling the same myself."

"I began to feel like it about an hour ago," I continued.

"So did I," he rejoined.

"Ah! mental telegraphy."

"Mental grandmother!" he exclaimed.

There was a pause then. Remarks of that character have a tendency to repress original observation.

Presently I tried again on another tack. "Wonder where Jensen is?" I queried.

Giles laughed. "Oh! birdliming the gooseberry bushes round the cottage to catch those precious burglars of his."

"Well, he has not put in an appearance since breakfast anyhow," said I. "Here, I'm off to look for him."

"Right you are," responded my companion. "I'm with you."

This was an unusual display of alacrity on his part, and as we left the house together the detective's words, spoken a few days ago, recurred to me. "I think we shall effect his cure before this business is cleared up," he had said; and as I reflected on the events of the last few days, and the way in which Giles' scepticism was gradually giving place to a genuine but puzzled interest, I smiled to myself and felt that Jensen's prediction was being verified.

"What are you grinning at?" said Giles, selecting a cigar from

his case and handing the latter to me. "No; from the other side, old chap, those are the ones you like."

"It's a beautiful evening," said I, closing the hall door behind us and ignoring his inelegant reference to my facial contortions. We struck the high road, and stepping out briskly, had soon left the village and the haunted cottage some half mile behind, when as if by mutual consent, we paused where a gate opened into a field on the left hand side of the road, and leaning our elbows on the top rail we gazed out across the meadows. Directly in front of us lay an arm of the river, at this point swift and deep, its bed divided from the road by a strip of meadow whose bright and verdant hue proclaimed its treacherous nature. Beyond the silent stream spread the wide flat tract of pasture land, so characteristic of all large valleys, cut up and intersected like a chess-board by the numberless small canals and ditches which took their source from the great main-stream on the far side of the valley. Beyond this the hills rose abruptly, their sides of that dark, almost sepia tint common to chalk hills where their surface is unbroken, forming a strong contrast to the soft green of the meadows at their feet. Away to the right where the valley wound round, following the course of the setting sun, as their manner is, a dark and strongly marked line showed where the bare hills gave place to a beautifully timbered park, which clothed the hill sides and descended to the very brink of the river, as though anxious to drink at the same fountain from which the quiet bosom of the vale seemed to derive such benefit.

"It's a beautiful country," said Giles presently, "even in winter."

"Yes," said I, "there is no county like it," which was perhaps a prejudiced opinion, but then we are most of us prejudiced in favour of our own tastes.

Seeing nothing, however, of the detective, we retraced our steps until we reached a small out-lying cottage, the first indication of the neighbouring village. Here our attention was attracted by the conduct of a countryman of the labouring class (presumably the owner of the aforementioned domicile), who, on our approach, had ceased his former occupation which consisted in digging a potatoe patch in front of the cottage, and was now leaning over the small wicket gate which acted as sole exit to the premises. As we drew near Giles nudged me with his elbow.

"Yokel means to address gentlemen, but doesn't feel quiet sure

of his ground," he remarked, his eyes twinkling with that quiet appreciation of small humour which I seem somehow to have been born without.

"Well, seeing that he is standing in his own front garden, I should say that in one respect at all events you are wrong," I returned.

"A fig for bad puns my boy, they don't become you. Can't you see the way in which the gentleman is drawing comparison between the mud on his boots and the tops of the trees? Now that mandarin-like motion of the head is a peculiar characteristic of the genus yokel on the approach of a superior, and denotes infallibly that he has something to communicate. Had our friend yonder nothing to say, his boots would absorb the whole of his attention, while the alternate contemplation of the heavens would be left for Sunday."

These signs, when pointed out by my companion, were sufficiently apparent; indeed, some ideas of a like character had passed through my mind on first catching sight of the individual in question; but it would never have occurred to me to subject the condition of the man's mind to such a strict analysis, and though dimly conscious of the position, I could never have derived that amusement from it which Giles was always drawing from the hundred and one little incidents of every-day life.

We had now so closely approached the object of our speculations, that I had all but taken the initiative and broken the ice by wishing him good evening, when a sound struck upon our ears, which at once turned our thoughts into a very different channel. A strange low cry as of someone in great distress rose suddenly on the evening air, and then as if in answer to it a loud hail in a man's voice at no great distance, all seeming to come from the direction of the river.

"There it is again," exclaimed the countryman, his face blanching in spite of its sunburned hue, "and there's someone else ahead of it this time."

"This time," exclaimed I sharply, "what do you mean? Have you heard it before?"

"Why, yes," answered the fellow slowly, beginning to drawl because my manner startled him. "I heard awhile ago—I was just agoing to speak of it when you cummed along. It *did* sound amost like someone calling for help."

"But where was it? In what direction?" I demanded hastily.

The yokel thrust the stump of a clay pipe, together with the fingers that held it, through his hair before answering, regarding me meanwhile with the air of a man who is conscious of possessing important information, but is, at the same time, afraid of keeping his knowledge to himself.

"Well now, mister, first it seemed to come from that way, and then it seemed to come that way," pointing in two totally opposite directions; "but I *think* it was along a bit down by the river there. Leastways it weren't fur."

Guided by this uncertain information, we turned once more and ran down the road, until we reached the point from which we judged the sound to have proceeded. We had barely arrested our footsteps when we heard a muffled cry for help out in the meadows, in the direction of the river and, seemingly, at no great distance.

"We have come too far," said I hurriedly, "there is a gap in the hedge further back near the cottage; we must get through there."

Two minutes more saw us through the hedge and scrambling down a high bank to the lower level of the meadows. After crossing a narrow muddy footpath we found ourselves standing knee-deep in tall, rank grass, and surrounded by oak trees, whose sombre shade warned us that the evening was drawing in. This acted as a fresh spur to our energies, for without daylight to guide us our difficulties would be increased tenfold. Our former intricate knowledge of the country left us in no doubt as to our actual position: indeed this particular spot was somewhat celebrated on account of the trees I have mentioned, the oak being rare in that part of the country.

We felt the importance of making the utmost use of the short time which remained ere darkness settled down. Acting upon these thoughts we were striding rapidly forward towards the river, when our progress was arrested by a strange, wild cry, a cry as of someone in great agony or else in mortal fear, and seeming to come from somewhere close at hand.

"Come on," cried Giles, hoarsely, "it's off the water. The mist is rising and carries the sound along." A few more strides brought us clear of the trees, and then I saw a thing which made my heart go down like lead.

All over the breadth of the valley, to north and south, to east and west, wherever the eye rested, a thick white mist was rising—slowly

at present, and hanging close to stream and meadow ; but I, who knew it well of old, knew also that in less than half an hour the whole valley would be swathed as in a blanket by this thick, insidious foe, so that any object at a distance of twenty feet would be indiscernible.

Steadily we advanced until we reached the river's brink, and there we paused to listen. With scarce a sound to indicate the vast force which lay dormant in its depths, the swift stream went gliding by, and even at that moment of intense mental tension I remember wondering how it was the water should travel on in that way, and yet not carry with it the mist which hung upon it.

But now was no time for dreaming, for there rang out once more that piteous cry for help—fainter this time and dying away into a moan, blood curdling in its intensity.

Giles was drawing in his breath preparatory to sending an answering halloe, when I clapped my hand over his mouth and pointed over the river to a thick alder bush upon the opposite bank. The branches of this bush were oscillating in a peculiar manner, sometimes dipping 'right into the water with a splash which sent the rings travelling far out upon its smooth surface. The rapidly increasing gloom, together with the mist, rendered it impossible for us to distinguish the cause of this disturbance, and for a moment we were at a loss as to our next move. I believe it would have ended in our wading across the river then and there if something had not occurred to prevent us. That "something" was the voice of a man which appeared to proceed from the heart of the alders in the immediate vicinity of the splashing.

"Where *ken* they hev chucked the poor beggar to? I'd a' most swear that he's not six futt from where I bees standing, and yet I can't see un nowheres."

A wave of recollections swept over me as I listened to this grumbling soliloquy. Though it was six years since I had heard that voice, I recognised it in a moment. There was no mistaking those well-remembered tones.

"Richards, Sam Richards," I shouted.

For a moment there was dead silence ; then came the sharp interrogation : "Who bees that a-calling to I?"

"Don't you know me, Sam?" I called back. "It is I, Harry Brooke, and young Mr. Ferney." My words were received with a

shout of surprise, followed by a great splash, and a stout, burly water-keeper came floundering across the stream in his waders. In another minute he had Giles and me by the hands, and his honest grey eyes were sparkling with pleasure as he gazed upon us, trying to discern our features in the failing light.

For some minutes he could articulate nothing beyond, "this bees good," and "how thee bees changed, young masters;" but at length I succeeded in bringing his mind back to the individual whose cries of distress had summoned us to the spot.

"Oh, the man in them creeses," said he, as though this were a matter of small moment, "I'm afeard as he's gone under."

"What man in what cresses?" cried Giles quickly.

"Why, you see, Master Giles—Lor! how you do be changed, Mr. Ferney—well, you see, Mr. Giles, as I was waiting down here this very evening with my wire, trying to take a big jack what had been troublesome for some time past, as I was waiting, as I say, just up the stream yonder, there came three men down over that there hedge by the roadway, Mr. Giles, and they three men was a-carrying along a big sack, and in that there potatoes-sack was what I took to be a man, leastways, by the shouting and the giggling of it, Master Harry, sir. Well, they carried this sack right down to the river and across by the bridge, that you sees a little way down, and then they give it three big heaves and over it went into yon creese bed. Now looking at things noways I couldn't think as these was right proceedings, Mr. Brooke, so I just took and ran after they with my jack pole. But I had my waders on, as you sees, Mr. Harry, and they ran too fast for I, so I came back and speered about for the sack, or leastways, the body in it. But I can't find neither," he finished with a look of perplexity.

"We must hunt until we do," said I, and suiting the action to the word I ran down the bank to the footrail which spanned the stream, and crossing rapidly plunged without hesitation into the large water-creese bed on the opposite side, regardless of the water, which was knee-deep and decidedly chilly. My example was speedily followed by my two companions, Giles crossing by the bridge and the keeper wading back through the river. Then commenced, with the exception of one, the most curious search in which it has ever been my lot to take part.

To begin with, had any one of us been asked suddenly what it was we

were looking for we should have been unable to answer. If the keeper's story were to be credited, then the object of our search was a human being tied up in a sack; but the very idea of such a thing seemed so absurd that I had rejected it as impossible after the first moment. The growing darkness and the mist must have deceived him. It was far more probable that the men he had seen were merely throwing refuse of some sort into the river, and this would quite account for their hasty departure on the appearance of the water-keeper; for such an offence, if brought to the ears of the Lord of the Manor, would be sufficient to lose them their situations. And yet there were those strange cries to be accounted for, heard not only by us, but by others also; and somehow, in a hazy and, as yet, scarcely acknowledged manner, I could not help connecting these incidents with the disappearance of Jensen.

By this time it was almost dark, and the mist hung like a blanket over everything, though no "wet blanket" was needed just now to make us sensible of the futility of our efforts. The water-cress bed was a large one and, as I said, the water was not only deep but very cold, which with the darkness served to render our quest the more hopeless. Indeed, after a few minutes, the utter uselessness of searching further without lights became so apparent to all of us that we stopped in despair.

"Can't think where he *ken* be to," said the stout keeper rubbing his nose reflectively.

"Are you quite sure they threw it in here?" said Giles anxiously.

"Yes, yes, they threw he in here, Master Giles, and I wants to get 'un out again," he added, more to himself than to us. "There's a powerful big spring runs from the back of this here creese-bed into the stream, and he'll pison all my fishes."

At this moment I caught my foot against a piece of plank that served as a means of crossing the cress-bed at its narrowest point, almost directly opposite the spot where Giles and I had stood on the other side of the stream, while listening to the soliloquy of the water-keeper. Lying across the plank, half in, half out of the water, was a shapeless lump. My cry of surprise brought the others floundering to my side, and in another minute we had the object out of the water and on to the bank.

We quickly made it out to be something or other enveloped in a large sack.

"Now then, Harry," said Giles in a low voice, "animal, vegetable or mineral?" He spoke lightly but his manner did not deceive me, for in reality he was as excited as ourselves. Anyhow, the keeper's ready knife soon solved the question. The sack was slit open and disclosed the unconscious figure of a man.

Was he dead?

He could scarcely have been drowned, for it was his feet, and not his head, that had been in the water; that end of the sack which had covered his head was still quite dry. Hastily I struck a match, and what was our dismay when by its light there lay revealed the pale face of Jensen, the detective.

I quickly raised his head and strove to force between his lips a little of the brandy from the pocket flask which long habit and a life of considerable adventure had taught me never to be without. But my efforts to restore him were unavailing, and I began to entertain grave fears lest we had arrived too late to save him after all.

To be concluded in our next.

Joy Cometh!

If Joy should come to you with smiling face
And outstretched hand,
To lead you gently to his dwelling place
In Love's enchanted land,

Go forth to meet him: gladly, with a smile,
Lest, if that day
You turn from Joy—Joy in a little while
Should turn his face away.

Joy scorned will pass in sadness from your side,
Lift then your eyes
And bid him welcome! for he opens wide
The gates of Paradise.

L. G. MOBERLY.

By the Hand of Uishma.

By FLORENCE MASTERS.

It was a glorious summer night, such a one as we in these cold, uncertain climes rarely, if ever, experience.

The moonlight gleamed on and silvered the walls, lattices and tiny minarets of a small, but picturesque, Eastern palace, and flooded the courtyard and garden adjoining the women's quarters, almost putting out the stars with its brilliancy, and for the time turned this nether world into a veritable fairy land.

In the centre of the courtyard a fountain threw up a hundred jets and sprays of clear water, which fell again into the marble basin surrounding it, bespangling the moon-kissed lilies and their broad velvety leaves with a thousand and one gems, that gleamed and scintillated as they heaved and rocked on the bosom of the waters.

In a thicket of rose bushes and flowering shrubs a bul-bul was softly pouring out his very heart in song, with the plash, plash of the fountain for an accompaniment; the air, softly refreshing, was laden with the scent of flowers and aromatic trees; taking into consideration the exquisite beauty of the night and the scene, a stranger entering the enchanted enclosure unexpectedly, might well be pardoned if he dreamed that at last he had lighted on an earthly paradise. That it was earthly was made apparent by the fact that it was haunted by two human forms, one of either sex, who, clad in picturesque Eastern garb, paced slowly up and down the principal avenue, which, like every walk within the courtyard, was paved with pure white marble.

The man was some five and fifty years old, tall and stately in mien, with long grey beard, clear cut features and fine dark eyes. He wore a full robe of soft white woollen texture girt about the waist with a parti-coloured scarf, whilst around his neck hung a heavy gold chain, denoting that he held some high official position.

The expression of his face was calm and beneficent, and as he talked he bestowed kindly glances and smiles on his companion from time to time.

And she? Ah, it needs a clever pen indeed to do justice to her

loveliness. Nature had indeed been more than lavish, when endowing this wondrous creature. Tall, slender, graceful, with complexion of lily and rosebud combined, almond shaped eyes of soft velvety brown, and rich ripples of dark hair, just now stirred and blown into little bewitching curls about her face by the night wind ; these and a hundred and one tricks and graces of manner, went to make up a whole so intoxicatingly beautiful, that to look on it was to love. For some time their conversation evidently ran smoothly and even merrily, for the girl's light laughter (she could have been barely sixteen) rang out clear and sweet. Then suddenly the man's manner changed as he put a question gravely to her.

"Nishma, child, have you ever thought of what your life may be in the future?" said he, and he waited somewhat anxiously for her answer; when it came, after a little pause, it evidently surprised him.

"Yes, my guardian, very, very often."

"Ah, then perhaps you have realised that you may not remain with me much longer," he went on. The girl suddenly lifted her head proudly, and the whole set of her features changed. A moment before her manners had been those of a petted child; now there came into her face a hard defiant expression which made her look years beyond her age.

"I am your slave," she said, "you can do with my life as you will."

"Nishma," exclaimed her guardian in pained accents, "what cause have I ever given you to think such things. You know that whatever may be the customs of this country, in yours and mine there are no slaves. Child, I shall never compel you in any way to act against the dictates of your heart. You have sadly misjudged Al Hassan if you have thought otherwise."

"Forgive me, my best of friends," Nishma exclaimed remorsefully. "Ever kind and good, how could I have thought evil of you."

"Then I may stay here always, may I not?" she pleaded, and her manner grew soft and winning.

"If you wish it, but first you must hear all I have to say, and then it will be for you to decide as to whether you will still share Al Hassan's humble roof, or occupy a very different position to your present one."

"I will listen, my guardian, but my mind is already made up. Had I been a man it would have been different, I would have flown

long before this; I would—" Suddenly she stopped short, but Al Hassan was startled as he glanced at her, for her eyes had grown angry and luminous, her mouth set in one straight, hard line, and her little hands hung by her side tightly clenched.

"What would you do?" said Al Hassan, in deep calm tones, contrasting strangely with her impetuosity.

"I would seek out my father's murderer," said the girl; "I would kill him with my own hands. Do you think I have forgotten my old home so far away? I was not too young to see how my mother faded day by day through deadly fear of the enemy who continually threatened my father's life. I have not forgotten the day she died; nay, nor a blacker one still, when my father's palace was levelled to the ground and he lay slain among the ruins. If I could only avenge him, I would willingly die to do so, but I can do nothing—I am but a weak woman;" and partly from a sudden revulsion of feeling, partly from nervous exhaustion, the girl burst into tears.

"Hush, child! do not spoil your pretty eyes with weeping," said Al Hassan in soothing tones; then added more sternly, "Zucca has been guilty of putting these ideas into your head. I had hoped that you would never hear of this feud which for generations has existed between two ancient families, of one of which your father was the head. When I learned of his death, I thanked heaven that he left no son behind him to carry it on."

"Do not blame Zucca," pleaded the girl, drying her tears hastily; "at any rate she believed it was her duty to tell me what I had forgotten, or was too young to learn, about my own people."

"Ah, I should have left her behind," murmured Al Hassan, referring to the time when he had sought out the only child of his old friend, and brought her back to a country in which he had already honour and renown. Zucca was waiting woman to Nishma, as she had been to the girl's mother before her, and it would have required a harder heart than Al Hassan's to have resisted her pleadings, when he spoke of separating her from the child whom she had nursed from a babe. Her devotion was touching, her love for her mistress almost painful in its intensity, and yet she was destined to bring about an event, the shadows of which overhung her heart's idol to the end of her life.

But of this Nishma had no warning, and so right royally she defended her old nurse. Al Hassan listened quietly to a summary

of the woman's virtues and then changed the subject—indeed he had an important message to deliver to Nishma, and chafed somewhat that the opportunity for so doing had been so long delayed. It was neither more nor less than an offer of marriage from the reigning Prince, who, having seen the beautiful girl, had become an instant captive to her many charms. Al Hassan himself, though a stranger, held a high position at Court, for he had in early life rendered the nation a great service, and now his ward was singled out for still higher honours, did she choose to accept them.

"Why does the king want to marry me?" she asked with naïve simplicity.

"He has seen and admired you—loves you in fact," was Al Hassan's reply.

"Loves me?" said the girl with uplifted eyebrows, "that is strange, seeing I have never spoken with him. What is love? Would he care if I should prefer to remain with you?"

"The idea of marriage is somewhat distasteful to you," suggested Al Hassan; he was in no hurry to part with her.

"No, I was hardly thinking of that, but please answer my question, my guardian. Would the king grieve if it were?"

"I think his heart is set on the matter," Al Hassan was obliged to acknowledge.

"Ah," she said catching her breath, whilst her eyes again grew darkly angry and the little mouth hardened perceptibly. "Tell the king this," she said looking straight before her, "*the day the last of my race dies I will be his bride.*"

"Nishma, Nishma, take an old man's advice and leave vengeance to the Higher Powers. Remember it has a trick of recoiling on the head of the Avenger. Let me be the bearer of some more pleasant message to my Royal Master," pleaded her guardian.

"My lips will frame no other," the girl replied, and there was that in her voice that warned Al Hassan that she did not intend they should; so not caring to prolong the interview, he gravely bade her good-night, and passing down the colonade, he vanished through a doorway overhung with a quaintly carved portal, that led to an outer court of the palace.

During the foregoing conversation, Zucca, the waiting woman, had been lurking in the shadows just out of ear-shot; but hardly had the

last sound of Al Hassan's foot-fall died away, than she was at her mistress's side.

"You are weary, my angel," she exclaimed as she gazed into Nishma's eyes.

"Wearied to death, good Zucca," the girl replied. "My best of guardians is generally such genial company, but for to-night, he has tired me out. I have news for you though, so we will go to yonder seat, and you shall hear all; but first run and look for my veil, I must have dropped it higher up the path, or may be it has caught in a bush."

The woman hastened to do as she was bid, and quickly came across the object of her search. As she turned to come back, she paused a moment to gaze on her mistress, who stood in the bright light of the moon, beautiful as a dream—motionless as a statue, apparently lost in thought. Suddenly, her look of intense admiration changed to one of horror. She caught sight of a long lithe body stealing with cat-like tread down the path towards her beloved charge. It had made its way out of the shade of some big shrubs, and doubtless had been in hiding for some time; as it turned and flashed its phosphorescent eyes angrily, Zucca discovered it was a large puma. All at once it crouched down as if to spring, and shrieking wildly she rushed forward, with an insane desire of throwing herself in its way, but, catching her foot in the hem of her garment, she stumbled and fell, striking her head against a marble curb. Up till the moment Zucca cried out, Nishma had been quite ignorant of her danger, but turning to see what had befallen her nurse, she found herself face to face with the brute, and in an instant realized his intention. Rapidly she scanned the long moonlit avenues in the vain hope that help might be near; and curious enough gave a passing thought to the nightingale, which was still warbling sweetly hard by. "My death song," she murmured, then summoning up a courage inherited from a long race of warlike ancestors, as the creature sprang she threw herself flat on the ground, and she was conscious that it leapt clean over her. It was an inspiration born of despair, but it had given her a moment's respite, and just as she was wondering in a dazed kind of way what would happen next, she heard approaching footsteps, followed by the sharp report of fire-arms and a heavy thud, and she knew she was saved.

For a minute or two she lay motionless, waiting for the beatings of her pulse to subside somewhat, then she thought of Zucca, and stretched out a hand to assist herself to rise. It was gently clasped in a strong firm grasp, and at the same time an arm slid under her and lifted her slowly to her feet. Thinking it was Al Hassan himself, she did not speak immediately, for she had hardly regained her usual composure, but raising her eyes, to her astonishment they rested on the very handsome face of a young man, a perfect stranger, who immediately hastened to enquire if she were hurt, and wonderful to relate, he addressed her in the liquid accents of her native tongue.

"No, I am safe, thanks to you; you have saved my life, you shot the brute?" she half questioned, pointing to a long dark shadow beyond where they stood, and she shuddered a little as she did so.

"Thank Heaven the door was open; my master usually keeps it locked. I heard a woman shriek."

"Poor Zucca, she must have been terrified. Thanks, a thousand thanks, to my preserver. If you will tell me your name, my guardian will add his to mine. But you must not linger here another instant, for this is the Women's Court, and Al Hassan's menials would treat you with but scant courtesy if they happened to see you."

"I know well the workings of Al Hassan's household for I am his secretary. I— hark! there are people coming. We must not be found talking to each other; farewell. I will not forget my deliverer;" saying which Nishma glided off in the direction from whence she had heard the sound of Zucca's voice.

And what of the young man? His first impulse was to follow her, but he restrained himself, remembering her commands, for he knew that from henceforth her slightest wish would be a law to him. In a flash of time her beauty had conquered him; he was no more his own, but the willing slave of her charms; now he would live but to gain her love. Slowly he retraced his footsteps, and left the Court by the same door as Al Hassan had done but a little time since. As he pulled it to, Nishma's deliverer likened it to a prison gate which shuts out all that makes life worth living.

"But I *must* see her again," he murmured. "Love will point the way."

And hardly had he said the words than by a strange piece of good luck he discovered that Al Hassan, in a fit of abstraction, had left the key in the lock. Instantly he possessed himself of it, and hurrying away, he

got a cunning old locksmith, whom he had before had dealings with, to take an impression of the key; then returning to his master, gravely presented it to him, saying he had just found it in the corridor, which was in a measure true. For two or three days after her exciting adventure, Nishma devoted her time to old Zucca, who was suffering from a nasty gash on her forehead, which she had struck in falling, and during that time the girl had leisure to think much, for absolute quiet was ordered the patient by the Court doctor, who, in accordance with the king's command, was in attendance on his betrothed's serving woman. From the king himself she had a missive, which, though short, was very much to the point. It ran as follows—"Light of my life, and source of all my joy, to thee greeting. The enemies of thy house are my enemies; fear not, they shall perish." Without knowing why, she shuddered as she read these words, and hastily thrusting them out of sight, her thoughts wandered, as they often did now against her will, to the young man who had saved her life by shooting the puma, which she had since learned had escaped from the Royal menagerie close by. Al Hassan had himself told her that her rescuer's name was Neshiloth, that he was of noble birth but poor, hence his position in the household. Furthermore, in return for the service rendered to his ward, Al Hassan had offered to procure for him a position at Court, but he had begged so hard to remain where he was that Al Hassan could not urge the matter further. A week later, Nishma stole out into the beautiful garden in the hush of the evening, and by this time Zucca had so far recovered that she accompanied her mistress. After a turn or two the girl insisted on her resting, whilst she herself strolled to gather roses, of which she soon had her hands full. Such a posy, great yellow and damask blooms, which filled the air with their delicate perfume; yet Nishma was not content, for high above her head hung a coveted bud of singular beauty, which she had tried in vain to reach. Suddenly someone from behind plucked the flower, and presenting it to her, said, in a rich voice she instantly recognised, "Flowers to a flower, and you the fairest of them all."

Then, before she had recovered from her surprise, Neshiloth, for it was he, caught the hem of her veil and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Sir! your boldness will cost you your liberty. How dare you enter this court again?" she exclaimed.

"Ah, chide me not," he cried, "for I would risk even life itself

to find myself once more face to face with you." And as he spoke he gazed so directly at her, that Nishma's eyes dropped and a blush stole into her cheeks. "Listen a moment longer to me," he went on, seeing she was about to interrupt him, "listen whilst I tell you that from the first moment we met, I loved you. That while breath is left in me I shall never cease to do so. I ask no return. I can hardly hope to win your heart; a man of no parts as I am—poor and unknown. But grant me one thing. Let me come sometimes into your sweet presence, smile on me, give me a kind word or a passing thought and I will be content."

"Nay, you ask too much. As a friend and one whom you saved from a terrible fate, you have my eternal gratitude, but probably you are not aware that I am the King's chosen bride, and that you are guilty of treason therefore, when you speak to me in this way."

"The king's chosen bride?" he questioned, starting as though he had been stung. "Then you love him?"

"How can I love him when I have never seen him? No, I do not understand you when you talk of loving mere strangers. I love Zucca and Al Hassan—I love my father, but no one else. But I am dallying with you, and at any moment we may be overheard. Farewell. Once more I thank you, my preserver, but, remember, you must never come here again." Then she turned and fled, leaving Zucca to follow when she grew tired of awaiting her mistress's arrival.

And Neshiloth, did he obey Nishma's commands, and forego the joy of merely being in her presence? Alas! no. Again and again he came, and thanks to his knowledge of Al Hassan's movements, his visits to the garden remained undiscovered.

Since his passionate overture had been received so coldly, he never alluded to love directly when with Nishma, but he read or recited poems full of the tender emotions, he talked to her of the language of flowers, then brought her blossoms fraught with meaning, and though at first she was cold as the marble paving stone in the garden, bit by bit she learned the lesson he had set himself to teach her, and a hitherto unknown happiness stole into her heart, making existence passing sweet and the whole earth suddenly wondrously fair.

But then came a time when Neshiloth could no longer restrain himself, and catching the beautiful girl to his heart, he read his

triumph in her soft dewy eyes; then raining a hundred kisses on her, vowed solemnly that only death should part them.

And where was Zucca all this time, that she took no better care of the chosen bride of the king? Either she was wilfully blind, or singularly obtuse, for she always managed to disappear when her presence was most needed. She had from the first been very much against her young lady marrying a heathen prince, and knew Neshiloth to be a fellow-countryman, and, furthermore, admired his handsome face and figure immensely.

"Kiss me, dear Zucca. I am so happy," said Nishma, one night when the serving woman was carefully brushing the girl's long wavy tresses.

"Have you something to tell old Zucca, my sweet?" said the faithful creature, doing as she was bid.

"No, not to-night—to-morrow perhaps I may have! To-morrow I may want your help!"

"Not too fast, my mistress. Remember the enemies of your father's house still go unpunished. Wait till the king has fulfilled the——"

"Ah! I had forgotten the contract. Why did I ever make it? Zucca, I would fain lay aside vengeance and think only of—love," said the girl with a little sigh.

"Have patience and both shall be yours. The moment the king lets you know that he has done your bequest, old Zucca will help you and your handsome lover. Trust her. She can make a way to escape."

"Ah, then you know all! You are a witch, Zucca. We will talk to-morrow, now leave me! I would sleep and dream." Saying which she flung herself on her couch, and as Zucca softly stole away, a happy smile came into the girl's face and remained there long after sleep had closed her eyelids. With the early morn she rose gay as a lark on the wing, light-hearted, full of hope and enchanting thoughts. But the day was not many hours old before her rejoicing was turned to mourning, her lightheartedness to heaviness and despair. An emissary from the king craved an audience of her, and presented a letter containing the following words: "Fairest among women! Thine enemies have bitten the dust. They lie low. None of them shall turn back by the way: they are lost in the Valley of Shadows! To-day will the king dwell in the light of thy presence. Greeting!"

As Nishma read the missive she grew white to the lips. Already! So soon the king would claim her! Then escape would be impossible. She and Neshiloth must part for ever. Ah! rather than be the bride of another she would die by her own hand. Oh for a little breathing space—a short respite. Then controlling herself she turned to the messenger.

"The rays of the setting sun are of the purest gold," she said. "Will the king be pleased to bask in them?"

The man bowed low to the ground in token of assent, and then he and his retinue filed slowly out of the chamber, and Nishma knew that until sundown she was free.

Immediately they had gone she sought out Zucca, and told her all.

"Dead! All dead! The last of that accursed race struck down. Then I have lived to see a great day," almost shrieked the old serving woman. "Now leave all to old Zucca! The king shall never find thee where she will hide thee. But first I must seek out Neshiloth. Tarry in the garden till I return," and kissing her mistress she hastened to make enquiries for the Secretary, but found to her surprise that he had not been seen in the Palace that morning. So she started for the city hoping there to gain news of him, as every moment was now of importance. Meanwhile Nishma slowly paced up and down under the shadowy marble colonnade, bearing the suspense as best she could. In spite of Zucca's cheering words, a heavy weight of fear rested upon her, and more than once her hand stole instinctively to her bosom, where lay hidden a little jewelled dagger, which might, if escape were cut off, be dyed with its owner's heart's blood ere day was over. As time went on and Zucca gave no sign, her heart grew heavier, and as she mournfully reviewed the past Al Hassan's words recurred to her "Leave vengeance to the Higher Powers! Remember it has a trick of recoiling on the Avenger's own head."

"True! Too true!" cried the girl, sinking down on a seat, and covering her face with her hands, a dull despair taking possession of her. For long she sat there motionless, save for an occasional shudder sweeping over her slight frame: then the sound of a foot-fall on the pavement caused her to look up. To her surprise Al Hassan stood before her, and she saw at a glance that his manner for him was strangely agitated.

"So you have had your desire, Nishma! vengeance on the enemies of your house. You little thought that in so doing you would strangely repay one who has rendered you a great service."

"What do you mean," said the girl, her voice hoarse with fear, whilst every drop of blood in her veins suddenly turned to ice.

"Just this!" replied Al Hassan, "Neshiloth, my Secretary, was the sole living representative of the enemies of your race. He was executed by order of the king this morning!"

A long piercing shriek came from the lips of Nishma, then she dropped lifeless at the feet of Al Hassan.

* * * *

Up and down the moon-lit garden of the Palace of Al Hassan, night after night, wanders beautiful witless Nishma, watching and waiting for one, who, never so long as she lives, will come to her again.

Just because I do.

You are not fairer, darling,
 Than other maidens be,
 Nor are you faultless, dear one,
 Nor always sweet to me;
 Yet, deep within your eyes, dear,
 There lies a jewel rare—
 A soul all pure and tender—
 The heart I love is there.

You ask me why I love you?
 Ask the parching flowers
 Why they love the tender dewdrops
 And the cooling summer showers;
 But *why* they love, my darling,
 They cannot tell—can you?
 And I, sweetheart, I love you,
 Just because I do.

G. HUBI NEWCOMBE.

On the Road to Benin.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS,

Author of "RISING OF THE BRASSMEN," and a hundred other
West African Sketches in Monthlies and Weeklies.

One time African Mail Service.

IT was grey dawn when a knocking at the door of my room beneath the "Atumba's" poop, and the words, "Crossin' the bar now, sir," roused me from sleep. Shaking down a shower of cockroaches from my thin pyjamas I donned a duck jacket, and went out into the slight coolness of early morning.

The steamer was swinging sharply up and down through the fringe of curling surf, where the roll of the South Atlantic piles itself in glittering ridges upon the shoals which block the Forcados mouth of the Niger. Salt spray flew in showers across her lofty poop, and a mass of sand-filled rollers broke apart before the thrust of the full bows. For a time I leaned over the rails, balancing myself against the rolling, until, passing a dancing buoy, the steamer drove out upon the smoother water inside the bar. There was now a red streak across the eastern sky, for day comes suddenly in the tropics, and, outlined against it, the tufts of feathery palms rose above a sea of drifting vapour. Behind was the moaning bar and mist; and in front more mist, and the indistinct loom of trees, which is the aspect every African river, from Senegal to Damara, presents at dawn.

The sun swung into sight, red and fiery, and as the vapours melted, the low-lying mangrove forest rose to view, intersected by streaks of shining water. Later, passing a spit of sand swept by eternal surf, we entered the Forcados river, the second in importance of the Niger mouths. The first is the Nun entrance, in which Akassa, the Royal Niger Company's headquarters, stands; but there are besides numberless creeks extending along three hundred miles of coast, through which the yellow waters of the great river empty themselves into the ocean.

The Forcados river, roughly speaking, is some five hundred yards

wide, an ever-flowing yellow stream, walled in by dense forest. Where a little firm earth borders its banks the oil-palms bend down their raw-green fronds towards its muddy waters. Behind these, massy cottonwoods, supported on buttress-like roots, raise their huge trunks two hundred feet in air. But firm earth is very scarce in the Niger Delta, and along the greater portion of either side, the dingy leather-leaved mangroves crawl on arched roots far out into the gurgling tide.

So we steamed up into the misty forest, the shimmering river breaking into wreaths of foam beneath the bows, until the aromatic odour of wood smoke told that a native village was at hand. Presently it came into sight, clusters of mud-walled, palm-thatched huts, nestling at the feet of feathery palms, amid pale green banana leaves and groves of paw-paw trees. This village has an unenviable reputation; and, while Europeans have traded in these creeks for four hundred years, various horrible rites of Ju-Ju worship and hideous cruelties are to-day carried on there, within a mile of the spot where British steamers lie every week, waiting the branch boats which bring out their cargo across the thundering Lagos bar. An officer of the Royal Niger Company narrowly escaped being murdered in it a little while ago, and the white traders give it a wide berth.

With a scream of her whistle the "Atumba" saluted H.M.S. gunboat "Sparrow," then straining at her cables in the seaward rush of tide, gray vapor rising vertically from her yellow funnel, and the red cross of St. George hanging in limp folds above her stern, for there was not a breath of air to temper the fervent heat. Then, with her screw-torn wake lapping among the mangroves of Gosshawk Point, the "Atumba" churned her way through the dismal swamps, bound for Sapelli.

It would be difficult for the most gifted writer to convey a clear idea of the Niger swamps. On every hand, as far as eye can see, stretch the dreary mangroves; olive-green leaves and white stems above; banks of rotting mud, festering slime, and yeasty water below. There is water everywhere, yellow lagoons shimmering beneath the dancing heat, winding river reaches, some wide, and some so narrow that, as the steamers pass, their yard-arms brush the trees on either side; and a network of tunnel-like creeks, creeping beneath the overhanging boughs in a bewildering maze. How the early explorers ever found their way out, after once entering these water-

ways, is hard to understand. Over all there hangs a dense, steamy atmosphere, which of itself would crush the vitality out of most Europeans, but, charged as it is with the emanations of rotting mud, and the sour odours of vegetation fermenting in the fierce heat of the tropics, there is sickness or death in it for the generality of white men. There are Europeans who thrive even in these swamps, and are healthier there than in the bracing North. These however are but few and far between; most die suddenly, or are glad to escape with their lives—broken-down wrecks.

It was towards the end of afternoon when we approached Sapelli, the point from which the late unfortunate expedition marched towards Benin. Near Sapelli, however, the dismal swamps give place to dry land, and this station, unlike most others in the Delta, is rich with the luxuriant beauty of the tropics. The river is as clear as crystal, and strewn with starry lily cups. The banks are clothed with feathery palms and immense cottonwoods, from whose massy boughs hang creepers of gorgeous hue, while at their feet are tall clusters of fragrant lilies, and the crimson spikes of the wild pineapple.

When the "Atumba" was moored to the sandy bank, for these creeks are invariably deep, I pulled off in the despatch gig to the hulk "Hindoostan," the headquarters of the three white officers who did what they could to maintain law and order in that district, in the name of the Niger Coast Protectorate. The past tense is used advisedly, for they too went down in the bloody massacre, a little while ago. Two of them were very young, and yet their duty was to rule a wide district, to keep the "trade routes" open by force of arms against depredators from the Fetich city, and to put down murder, wife stealing, and the waylaying of peaceful traders. They did their work well, as far as lay in human power, and they died in the doing of it, a fate which has overtaken many other Englishmen in the Niger creeks. The "'tween decks" of the hulk had been turned into a court room, and there the officers sat daily, amid a mass of naked black humanity, endeavouring to get at the one thread of truth in all the tissue of lies woven by native witnesses, and breathing an atmosphere, at the memory of which the writer's throat rises even now. Opposite the hulk lay a compound of scorching sand, fringed by rustling palms, whereon were erected the quarters for the black Mahomedan soldiers of the Protectorate.

Now, it is noticeable in West Africa, that the coast tribes (with the possible exception of Senegali and Krooman) are low-grade savages, lazy, drunken, and worshippers of wood devils and ghosts. Neither is it strange, to those who know this littoral, that, where the negro has come into contact with the white men of the settlements, the improvement is very doubtful. European civilization touches the West African but lightly. On the other hand, once the swamp-land is passed, a higher order of native is found. The faith of Islam is followed, and there is neither drunkenness, debauchery nor human sacrifice in honor of the river devil Amalaku. The men are either soldiers or traders, dwelling in large, fenced cities, practising many arts, and boasting a commerce which extends from the Niger mouths to Tripoli and Fezzan.

Thus it is, that every black soldier in the service of the British Government in West Africa (with the exception of the Sa Leone West Indias, whose religion is hard to determine), is a Moslem, and generally a Hausa or Yoruba.

Standing in the lengthening shade of the palms I watched the troops at drill. Tall, soldierly men they were, black enough in color, but with straighter hair and much finer features than any coast tribe. The blood of the Northern Arabs, which has stamped its individuality upon the whole of Africa, from Algiers to the Zambesi, was in their veins, and as they swang smartly through their drill in the burning sun-glare they looked, what they have proved themselves to be in the smoke of many a burning stockade, unexcelled forest soldiers. While European influence upon the nature of the negro after four hundred years of intercourse is practically nil, and horrible rites are carried on to-day, under the very nose of Consul and Commissioner, the older civilization of the East, and the religion of the sword, has turned many Negro nations from naked savages into renowned traders or disciplined soldiers. Why this is so the writer must leave cleverer men to explain.

So much for Government officer and soldier. Let us now see how the trader does his work. Against the steep bank of the creek there lay a flotilla of canoes, craft of all sizes from an unwieldy vessel, forty feet by eight, hollowed out of a single cottonwood, to tiny ones twelve feet long and two feet beam. All were loaded to the water's edge with greasy black kernels and sticky yellow palm oil, the staple export of the Niger, and the only one worth mention,

with the exception of broken-down Europeans. The crews thereof, gigantic river-men, clad in nothing but a foot-wide strip of cloth, and a device of blue tattoo standing out in high relief upon their ebony skin, were shouting and fighting among themselves to be the first to land their cargo. All were of great breadth of shoulder and splendid muscular development of arms and chest, for the paddle is rarely out of their hands, and their hair was knitted up into corkscrew plaits. In the stern of every craft were piled sharp matchets and flintlock guns, for when a river headman desires to replenish his treasury, he generally does it by murdering the oil-carriers and confiscating their goods, until some long-suffering Consul goes up with the Yombas and burns his stockade. There were many women among them, in as scanty attire as the men, several carrying a woolly-haired infant, slung behind their shoulders in a strip of netting; and it may be observed, that African beauty—unadorned—is by no means gratifying to European eyes.

On the beach two young trading clerks, white-faced and sickly, as are most Englishmen in this region, stood beside a big tub measure, a "cooler," into which each sable merchant casts his load of kernels, receiving in return a tally or voucher. Considering that half the time these clerks have the fever upon them, and that they work from dawn to dark in heat and steam, it will be granted that they earn the £60 or £70 per annum, which is the usual pay for the first two years. As a rule, they die before the salary is raised. The writer felt disposed to agree with a Scotch Quartermaster, who remarked drily, "Man, brekkin stones wud be a luxury after that."

Later, I visited the store-sheds, where the palm oil is stowed, after being carefully probed lest the wily savage had inserted chunks of wood therein, the latter being cheaper than oil. Here a number of Accra coopers, brawny Fantis from the Gold Coast, were hard at work closing up the big puncheons in which oil is shipped. When they had time, they showered insulting comments upon the Nigerman, for one West African race looks down upon another as the dirt beneath its feet. The writer was once rebuked by a naked savage for calling him a nigger.

"No sah," he said in the "Coast palaver," "I be chief too much in we country, only Liberia Customsman and low bushman Nigger, Sah."

The scene in the trade shed of a West African factory, where the

vouchers are exchanged for goods, is a thing to remember. The temperature of the low building of galvanized iron was almost insupportable. It was also crammed with burly river-men, hurling down their tallies, shouting, pushing, and grabbing at whatever took their fancy, regardless of price; while the harrassed agent ran to and fro, soaked in perspiration, doing what he could to protect his goods from wholesale loot. How any man, weakened by many fevers, can work twelve hours a day in a stifling room where the atmosphere is thick with the odour of palm oil, rubber, and the naked negro—and this last is very different from that of Araby—it is hard to say, but it is done in the oil rivers. Trade powder, flintlock guns, hair oil, used as condiment, brass-framed looking glasses, and rolls of Manchester cotton, value two shillings in standard currency on the Niger, were mostly in demand, but there is also a very large trade in salt and gin, of which more hereafter.

When the day's work is over at dark, a little after six throughout the year, the trader retires to the verandah of his wooden house, which is invariably raised high on piles, in the hope of escaping the worst of the miasma. There he sits, smoking and driving off the swarming mosquitos, until it is time for him to turn in and sleep, if the heat will suffer him, thankful that another weary day is done. There is nothing else to do, for wandering alone in the pitchy darkness of the forest trails soon palls on one; besides, this kind of amusement is generally followed by fever. Three or four factories, at half mile intervals, usually compose a West African settlement, and the inhabitants are not, as a rule, on good terms with one another. Trade jealousy, and the nervous irritation of Africa prevent social intercourse, and beyond what he terms a "jamboree" with the officers of an occasional steamer, which is productive of headache and remorse, the Palm-oil ruffian is left to his own devices. A hard life, and yet it has a strange fascination of its own. Men who have lived any time in West Africa and escaped from it, generally drift back in the end, to die of fever and be buried in a ricketty gun-case amid the quaking swamps. Why, they cannot explain themselves, for the usual description is "a ghastly place."

It was burning noon, two days later, when we steamed down a wide river mouth towards New Benin. Although the sea was only some dozen miles away, we had journeyed one hundred through the

creeks, for the surf-swept bar is rarely attempted now, and vessels go round *viâ* Forcados.

New Benin is not a fascinating place, as seen from the river, neither does it improve on closer acquaintance. Imagine a mile-wide sheet of shimmering water, on the one hand a sombre cottonwood forest, where woolly wreathes of fever mist crawl in and out among the giant trunks, and on the other side the eternal mangroves crawling out across ooze and mud, among which are four white-washed factories, and you have this delectable settlement.

As we swang round a point the tide caught the steamer's bows, and before the reversed engines could check her way, she plunged half her length into the watery forest. The pale mangrove stems crumpled up like cardboard before the iron bows, huge slimy roots tore out of the ooze and scraped the vessel's side, while the decks were strewn with splintered branches and fallen leaves. Ants, inch-long venomous spiders, centipedes, and mangrove flies, whose bite means a poisoned wound, showered down upon us, and it needed some skill to keep out of harm's way. The propeller whirled astern, churning up festering mud and rotting leaves, while the exhalations rising from this sewer of the tropics almost took one's breath away, but presently the "Atumba" backed safely out and was afloat once more. This is an accident common enough in the Oil Rivers, and gives some idea of the depth of water among the crawling roots, and of what a mangrove swamp is like.

Presently we stopped again to let a long line of canoes cross our bows this time. On they came, the curious spear-head paddles churning up the foam as they drove the deeply loaded craft through the shimmering water, the slaves (and domestic slavery is prevalent in several of our West African colonies) who dipped the paddles hissing loudly at every stroke. Bags of salt and green cases of Hamburg gin filled the waist, while in the stern was the traders' bodyguard of fighting men, the barrels of their flintlock guns, and matchet blades glistening in the sunlight. The merchant himself, a big negro, dressed in crownless silk hat, cast-off mate's jacket, and nothing else, lolled under a palm leaf awning. A wonderful journey lay before a portion of that salt and gin. Through many creeks, and across broad lagoons, still unknown to white men, it is carried in canoes. Afterwards, on the heads of slave women, it traverses leagues of forest and swamp until the dry land beyond the fever belt is reached.

Then the camel trains of the northern Arabs take it up in turn, and the journey goes on northwards across the wastes of the Sahara, which is by no means all "a sandy desert," towards Fezzan, and some eastwards towards Khartoum and the Nile. The ways of the negro are not those of the European. Distance, time, and directness of route, are no object to him in a country where a dashing raid procures ample carriers, and when the Protectorate troops turned out river pirate Nana, whose stronghold lay a few miles from New Benin, they found Eastern weapons there. The writer was shown some guns and sword blades, beyond doubt the work of craftsmen of Damascus and Hindoostan. By what route they reached Benin did not appear, though they may have passed from hand to hand among the Arab and Nubian tribes about the upper Nile, such weapons being common in Egypt. It is probably no exaggeration to say that every few bags of salt taken up, and every few tons of oil brought down, costs the life of a slave, and the mortality among the white traders of the Niger is very heavy. It is hard for those whose lines have fallen in comparatively pleasant places, and who sit at home at ease, to realise that much of the cargo which throngs our ports is paid for with blood as well as gold, and English blood too. If any have doubts they have only to consult West African statistics, or consider what happens in deadly Brazilian harbours, where four entire crews have been known to die of fever before their vessel could be discharged. But neither pestilence nor danger, snowy range or tangled swamp, can turn aside the fierce energy of the Anglo-Saxon, where there is a possibility of the extension of commerce or dominion. So in the Oil Rivers, as elsewhere, when Government officer or trader falls at his post, there is no lack of adventurous spirits ready to step into the imminent breach. Occasionally one wonders whether, after all, it is worth while, and if the game is worth the candle—but this is a big question, and those who are interested can work these things out for themselves.

At certain seasons of the year headless bodies drift down this river with every ebb tide, as they do down a certain creek in the Calabar district, a grim hint of what goes on in the dark places just beyond the borders of the Niger Protectorate. Also, if the stories of the native traders are true, the cruelties practised by the robber headmen in honour of Amalaku, and the "Ju-Ju" devils are horrible and extensive. Many of them happen within thirty miles of British

Consulates, and points where steamers call every week, which shows how little contact with civilized white men does for the Negro savage. There are those who wonder why, instead of turning its arms against the Mahomedan Powers higher up the river, where in spite of the slave trade, there is comparative peace and order, the Royal Niger Company did not clean out some of the habitations of unspeakable cruelty within a short distance of its headquarters at Akassa; but the Chartered Company doubtless knows its own business best.

Presently the "Atumba" was moored alongside the principal factory of New Benin. It stands upon a square clearing where the mangroves have been hewn down and enough sand, brought from the thundering bar in canoes, piled among their roots to carry the oil, salt, and gid sheets; and the trader's house, the usual rickety, wooden building, with its supporting piles, projecting roof, and wide verandah. Beyond what is required to roll the cargo down to the steamers, there is not an inch of unoccupied space, for it needs much labor and constant supplies of fresh sand, to repair the ravages of the burrowing crabs and prevent the whole sinking through into the quagmire below. On three sides the reeking swamps surround it, foul depths of slime and the exasperating sameness of the mangrove foliage walling it in. The piles are eaten through and through by boring worms, and the verandah creaks and groans as one steps across it. The house reeks with moisture, for when the sultry breeze comes down the river it brings with it the steam of the lagoons, and when it blows in across the thundering bar, the air is heavy with spray.

This extraordinary dampness is one of the characteristics of Western Africa. Even in the fierce heat of the so-called dry season, unused clothes and boots are covered with the mould in a week, and everything likely to be injured by moisture must be hermetically sealed. One West African factory resembles another very much, in other places besides Benin, and the description applies to all.

The trading stations here are situated about three-quarters of a mile apart, and as there are only four or five in all, and the usual white staff of each is one agent and two clerks, they could apparently offer no resistance at all if the warriors of the sable potentate, who rules the Fetich stronghold some thirty miles away, decided to come down and loot them.

It is remarkable that in spite of the Protectorate troops burning

down Nana's stronghold, which lay close behind New Benin, no attempt was ever made to pillage the undefended factories. The same thing happened when the fierce Ninih tribe (the Brassmen) came down, eight hundred strong, and looted the Royal Niger Co.'s headquarters at Akassa, where they butchered some 120 Krooboy laborers in cold blood. Both going and coming, the tribesmen passed the independent factories at Brass, and yet no violence was offered. This can only be due to two things. Either the negro is careful in discriminating between those white men, against whom he imagines he has a justifiable quarrel, and those who have done him no ill; or else the head men levy so high a blackmail upon the oil carriers for the doubtful privilege of passing through their territory, that they do not desire to kill the goose which lays the golden eggs.

The Consulate at New Benin very much resembles the factories. It is also built on sand piled among the swamps, and has neither parapet nor stockade. If an attack were made upon it the place could only be held by the courage and skill of its defenders, a thin garrison of Yomba soldiers. The writer once travelled a short distance through the dry (save the mark) forests, which lie behind Benin, and a few words of description may give a faint idea of what the punitive expedition has to face.

At first, the narrow trail led beneath groves of tall palms, where we waded knee-deep amid fragrant white lilies and crimson flowers. Then, as we left the flushing river further behind, the palms gave place to immense cotton-woods; and the ground grew damp. Festoons of creepers hung from every massy bough, among which predominated the rope-like tendrils of the "ti-ti," which must be cut with a machet before the wayfarer can pass. Thorny bushes, too, grow up, shoulder high in many places; and as the trail was not more than eighteen inches wide it was difficult to get through without leaving portions of one's garments behind. How the naked savage manages it, would seem hard to say, but he always travels by water when he can, and a negro, handy with the cutlass-like machet, can slash a pathway almost anywhere. Later, a maze of narrow creeks crossed the way, their banks bordered by evil-smelling mud, and after crawling from mangrove root to mangrove root, over black depths of bubbling slime, we concluded we had seen enough, and hoped that no fever would follow.

It must be borne in mind that the forest tribesman, or "bushman"

as he is usually termed in West Africa, rarely fights in the open. An ambush is his speciality, and loading his gaspipe gun with one handful of trade powder and two of broken cast iron, he crouches among the cotton-wood roots beside the trail, and fires the murderous charge into his adversary's back at point-blanc range. Afterwards, if the foe is not killed or disabled, for flintlock guns are eccentric, and do not always go off when desired, he glides away among the leaves, and it is useless for anyone, not to the manner born, to attempt to follow his trail.

As to Old Benin, many extraordinary stories are told by native traders. Some say it is full of ivory; the general opinion is there is at least some treasure in ivory there. That many slaves are immolated and buried beneath the foundations whenever a new house is built, as well as hung up by the hands, and allowed to slowly die, when the land suffers from either too much or insufficient rain, there is little reason to doubt. One white man told the writer that the bodies, being above ground level, did not rot but changed into a hard, leathery substance; but whether this is so he cannot say. As a matter of fact, only five or six Europeans have ever been in the place at all, and were suffered to see very little, for obvious reasons, though one of them declared to the writer that when he lay in his hut at night he heard a regular battue of unfortunate slaves and prisoners going on. They were, so he said, being driven past an armed guard, and struck down one by one as they went. However, enough horrors, real and imaginary, have already been written about Old Benin, and the writer having been no nearer than thirty miles of it has no desire to add to the number, knowing as he does what effect the West African climate has upon the veracity even of the best intentioned white men.

Therefore, in conclusion, he leaves the "Atumba" moored to the rickety wharf at New Benin, with the ebb tide swirling against the bows, and ghostly wreathes of fever mist creeping across the yellow river as darkness settles down with the suddenness of the tropics.

A Very Simple Story,

OR A GENEROUS SURRENDER.

By JESSIE E. ENGLISH.

THE gardens which stretched out on either side of the Squire of Elmdon's house were considered the fairest and most picturesque in all the village, and for miles round. There was one little corner more beautiful than the rest, through which ran a tiny stream like a streak of silver, bordered by daisy-covered banks and shaded by arching trees. It was just the spot for lovers to dream away a summer afternoon; a spot where one might forget the busy world for a while and imagine oneself in Arcadia. But to feel that, one must be in the heyday of youth and happiness, and it was not joy that was reigning paramount in the hearts of a man and woman, who stood close together in that sheltered corner, in the soft twilight of a June evening. They were gazing intently in each other's eyes, with hands tightly clasped, blind to the beauty of the scene around; for they were lovers and had come there to say farewell. It was just a simple story, begun and finished in a few weeks, and yet to those two it seemed that life before was only a blank, and scarcely to be remembered. Margaret Power was the only child of the Squire of Elmdon, motherless from early years, but fondly loved and cherished by an indulgent father. Closely guarded from the outside world, watched over with an almost jealous care from childhood, she had grown up a bright, innocent, happy girl, looking out upon life with joyous, "unseeing" eyes, believing she was one of the favoured few to whom there could come nothing but sunshine. When she was almost seventeen a great event took place—Mr. Villiers, one of the richest landowners in Elmdon, and her father's most intimate friend, proposed for her hand, and was accepted. The village marvelled, first in silent astonishment and then in busy gossip, for Mr. Villiers was almost as old as the Squire, though of course he looked a very different man, and in spite of his five and forty years cast many of the younger men quite into the shade. Then there was not a better sportsman in the place, and in society he was a general favourite; and so, after all,

the engagement was only a nine days wonder, the fact was accepted and surprise died out. And what about Margaret herself? When her father had spoken to her first of Mr. Villiers' wishes, she was too amazed to answer. The Squire had gently urged her, he was failing rapidly in health, he wanted to see his little girl safe and in good keeping. Villiers was rich, generous, and he loved her: he was willing to wait any length of time for her, and so gradually she drifted into the idea that she loved him, and some day, "oh not yet, but ever so far away," she would marry him, and all would go well. After all, it made little difference to her, Mr. Villiers was gentle and considerate, remembering how young and inexperienced she was, and besides it was understood he was not to hurry her in any way. He had watched her grow up from childhood, and it always seemed the most natural thing in the world for her to seek her old friend's counsel and help in anything she undertook. And so for more than a year her life had gone on calmly and undisturbed, till, six weeks before this June evening, there came to Enderly Court, a visitor, Mr. Villiers' nephew, a bright, handsome fellow of five or six and twenty. He came among them, taking everyone by storm, winning affection speedily by that indefinable grace of manner which nature bestows upon only a few. As soon as his eyes fell on the sweet face of Margaret Power, and he felt the irresistible charm of her constant companionship, his heart passed for ever out of his own keeping, and Margaret took it into hers. At first it was all unconsciously. They were thrown much together, both young, both full of life, with the same thoughts and interests. They rode, walked and talked together, and before they knew it themselves the mischief was done. A chance look or word had betrayed their danger, and they woke to the reality of what was before them. It was a terrible moment when they realized the truth, and the hopeless prospect of the future. Margaret knew to her cost that love for the first time had found its way into her life, bringing to her happiness more exquisite than she had ever known, but alas, with it sorrow and despair. And now since the discovery was made, there was nothing left to them but to say farewell, to wrestle and fight with their own hearts, and crush out the love that had sprung up there rapidly but yet so strong.

"Margaret, I do not know how to say good-bye. I cannot leave you," cried Ernest Villiers as he watched the colour die out of the face of the girl beside him. "It is a mistaken sense of honour

that will make you ruin your life and mine. Why should you sacrifice yourself to a man old enough to be your father? Why should you be bound by a promise made for you, before you were old enough to understand what you were doing? It is cruel, it is unjust, and you shall not do it."

"Hush," said Margaret, gently, "I cannot take back my word. I dare not break my promise; better that I should suffer than Geoffrey should believe me false; we must bear our burden; but do not make it harder still for me," and here the low resolute tones faltered, and Margaret hid her face between her hands.

"Then you do care, darling," said Ernest "a little?"

"Oh, Ernest, more than anything," answered Margaret, the fervour of her reply compensating for its want of eloquence. "I never understood before what these things meant, but Geoffrey is so good, so honourable and true, I cannot break his heart. You must leave me now, forget me if you can, and we must not see each other again, till we can meet with our love conquered."

"Then this is our last good-bye, for that day will never come for me," cried Ernest hotly. And so, with despair in their hearts, and their white faces drawn with pain, farewell at last was spoken. Ernest left all that the world held dear for him, and the sunshine of Margaret's life died out. The summer days came and went, their long weary hours were dragged through somehow; everything went on as before, and yet all was changed. Mr. Villiers watched the girl with tender, anxious eyes. What ailed her, what had come over her the last few months? The pretty colour from her cheeks had faded, and the dancing, buoyant step seemed always listless and weary now. Surely there was something wrong. It was not that she was wayward or capricious, indeed it seemed as though her gentleness and sweet womanliness deepened with every day, and he saw her striving always to shape her views and wishes to his with a gratified delight. And yet, and yet, all was not well. When the Squire, whose perception was never very keen, began to notice the change in his little girl, his heart sank, and he trembled lest the dread enemy who had carried off his fair, young wife, should have set his seal upon this treasure also.

"I'll tell you what it is, Villiers," he said, as the two men sat together over their wine in the dining room, while the faint music of Margaret's piano floated in through the open door. "The child must go abroad, You must take her south, a winter away will set her up altogether, I

cannot watch her fading like this. Let us have no more delay, she is young, but you will be father and husband in one to her, I shall not fear when once she is in your care."

And so Geoffrey Villiers pleaded gently with Margaret that evening, in the flower scented drawing room, as she sat at the grand piano, looking so slight and fragile in her white gown. But the girl wavered and hesitated still, and smiled away his anxiety for her health.

"Wait just a little longer, Geoffrey," she said wistfully, "Indeed I am trying to get used to the idea."

"It has been a long trial already, Margaret," answered Mr. Villiers, "and I am growing tired of waiting, I am no longer a young man, I want you so much, and for your own sake also, dearest, come to me, I will make your life happy, and you shall grow quite well again, and rejoice your father's heart, he grieves so much about your altered looks." The pleading grew stronger and stronger, till Margaret saw no way of escape, and by and by the wedding was arranged to take place before the winter set in. Vainly she tried to crush down the thoughts and feelings that rose unbidden in her heart; sometimes she felt it was impossible, she must confess all to Geoffrey, and claim his forbearance and forgiveness. And then some new evidence of his love and care would fill her with agonising self-reproach, and she could not speak the words that almost rose to her lips. Preparations were advancing now day by day for the wedding, when one morning Mr. Villiers' man rode over with a note from Margaret, who was waiting the arrival of her fiancé to discuss with him some important details in connection with the approaching ceremony. Margaret broke the seal and glanced at the large, bold handwriting. What was there in the few words that made her face pale and her heart sicken? Only this:—"My darling, I cannot come to you this morning, as I hoped to do. Have just received bad news from London; Ernest has met with a serious accident, a fall from his horse, and is lying very ill in his chambers. I go to him at once, but expect to return speedily. In haste, yours ever, GEOFFREY."

Margaret sank upon a low seat, and the note fluttered from her hands to the floor. This was the climax of all things. Ernest ill, dying perhaps, and she in ignorance, unable to go to him or see him, What if he died, and they never met again? She could not bear it any longer now. As soon as Geoffrey came back she *must* tell him all; she could not marry him, come what may—and then her father,

her dear, indulgent father would take her away, away from everyone, and she should busy herself in some distant place, where nobody would know her miserable story. But the days passed, and Mr. Villiers did not return. Hurried notes were written, telling first of grave anxiety, "Ernest unconscious," then later "Hope still left, but Ernest delirious and in a high fever."

It was imperative that Mr. Villiers should remain close at hand, as he was his only near relative, and besides he was deeply attached to the boy. And while Margaret was wandering like a lost spirit up and down the long drive, straining her eyes always for the advent of the postman, Mr. Villiers was sitting in a darkened room, close beside the lad, who had ever been as dear as a son to him, listening to the wild, incoherent ravings of delirium. As he sat there, hour after hour, soothing him as gently as a woman, he heard over and over again the one cry of "Margaret, Margaret!" Then snatches of conversation, Margaret's pleadings, Ernest's reproaches, and bitter reckless words, or sadder still, mad prayers that God would take his life, or at least his memory, and bring him peace again.

Geoffrey Villiers sat like a man turned to stone. He could gather from the workings of that poor, fevered brain much of what the past had been;—how those two young hearts had gone out to each other, and grown together, how they had decided in deep remorse that they must part lest they should bring sorrow into his life. In a flash Geoffrey's eyes were opened, and he saw the events of the last few months unrolled before him like a scroll. Ernest's visit, his hurried departure, Margaret's depression and gradual loss of health; then her reluctant consent to their speedy marriage, which in his blindness he had imagined was but the result of her girlish timidity in taking so grave a step. Yes, all was clear as day; why had he not guessed it long before? Thank God, there was yet time to avert the sorriest of all mistakes.

At first the blow fell heavily, and Geoffrey's disappointment was bitter indeed, but he had ample time there for calm reflection, and somehow, in spite of himself, a great wave of pity swept over his heart. He was a proud man: that was well for him, and a man of quick decision and action. His mind was rapidly made up as to the course he should take. When Ernest came gradually back to life and reason, and was able to lie contentedly in the first dreamy stages of convalescence, Mr. Villiers told him quietly, and in few words, how he

had become possessed of the secret, which he was well assured Ernest would have carried with him to his grave, had not the hand of fate intervened. How he exonerated both of them wholly from blame—how his first wish was for Margaret's "real" happiness. "And that, my boy, you will have in your keeping," he continued, "I surrender to you the dearest and most sacred trust in the world, see that you make her life what I should have striven to make it, only that I should have failed, and you—will succeed."

Cutting short the eager words of gratitude, mingled with murmurs of self accusation which would have overwhelmed him, Geoffrey took the lad's thin hand in a warm, close clasp.

"Don't waste your strength, my boy, and don't fight against your own happiness. It was inevitable, and I was a fool to expect her to care for me, an old stager like her father. May cannot mate with December—no, nor even with October," he added, with a fleeting smile. "I am going to write to Margaret myself, and so the best thing you can do is to hurry up and get well."

Margaret's tears fell fast over the generous, tender letter that came to her, but they were only like the shower that comes before the passing of the clouds. "And now my dear," so the letter ended, "in a few more days, Nurse Oakham declares Ernest will be strong enough to see a visitor, who will not agitate him too seriously, and so I want you to come up with your father and help to complete his cure. I am leaving immediately for a long yachting expedition with my old friend Stanton. I should like you two young folks to make up your minds quickly as to a sunny spot, where you may both get quite strong, for remember, when I see little Margaret again, she must be as blooming as a rose."

And so it was that after a while when "time"—that never failing friend, who comes with so kindly and so subtle a hand to round off the sharp edges of pain, and smooth down the rugged corners in our life's pathway—had done his silent work, there was a joyous re-union at Elmdon; and Geoffrey Villiers returned, able to look with calm, glad eyes upon that radiant happiness, the fruits of his own generous surrender.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

"He alone is great,
Who, by a life heroic, conquers fate."

PROLOGUE.

THE SONG OF A SIBYL.

JANUS, god of gates, is a strange wise god. Many are the highways of life, and the gateways thereof are many. And the keys in the hand of Janus are without number, wrought into cunning double shapes are they of every created thing, both in earth and heaven. And over every gateway is a name written in a strange tongue, for the titles of the god are numberless as the shining stars floating through the dome of his palace roof.

He alone may turn a key who can read the name set above it. Therefore, waste not thy life, oh, man, beating against a gate whose title thou canst not learn, for to thine hand is it shut for ever. Many and strange and vain are the prayers made to Janus. Oh, foolish men and blind, who see not the length of one day's journey, cease the clamour of your vain supplication. It is better to wail at the dawn than at the sunsetting.

Know that the strange god sits ever immovable, seeing with his two faces not only the beginning of life, but the whole length of its highways to the end thereof, to eternity's gate and beyond, far beyond to the land of the White Country, whose borders remain uncrossed by any shadow for ever. For Janus, the strange wise god, before whose open gate lies the turmoil and war of the world, and behind whose closed gate peace dwells, a dove with silver wings, safe sheltered for ever, Janus, the keeper of the keys, Janus, god of gates, is *immortal*.

Many are the worshippers in his temple; from afar they come from all lands under the heaven. Wise are the counsels of Janus, if men would but hear, and hearing would help themselves.

Listen now, oh, children, to the song of a Sibyl ; to the song of the fate of a man:—

It fell upon a time that Damocles fled away to the temple of Janus, for the gates were shut and the year was a year of peace. Nevertheless, his flight availed him nothing, for afar to the innermost court the sword of his fate followed hard after. Then, in his despair, he prayed for counsel, and the strange, wise god answered him thus:

“Know that over the head of every living man hangeth a sword, visible or invisible. Make for thyself, oh, Damocles, a little mud hovel, with neither door nor window ; wall thyself off from the world ; know assuredly that the sword will yet follow thee, only hidden from thine eyes by the darkness, and will fall some day, sweeping thee and thy pitiful hovel to the lowest abyss of destruction.

“Rather join thy fellows and work for the great gods at the palace of eternity. Stand serene and unmoved, though the shadow of the sword fall ever across thy path, and then it shall be well with thee. For whether or no the sword falls, and howsoever endeth thy journey here, thou wilt reach the White Country at the last, whose borders remain uncrossed by any shadow for ever.”

Now Damocles bowed his head at the voice of the god Janus, and went on his way in silence.

* * * *

The long years sped on their course—years of toil at the great palace of eternity—till there came a day when the god of Life and the god of Death sent Damocles on a far journey to the gate of the White Country, with the work he had done in his left hand ; but his right hand was empty. Ever over his head hovered the sword of his fate, moving onwards through the air, musically as the sound struck from the passing wing of a swan. But on the border land of the Elysian Fields the sword stooped in its flight, lower and lower circling, till Damocles stretched his right hand out, and took it, trembling, in his grasp.

And lo ! a miracle. With opened eyes he knew at last in the sword of his dread—beautiful now and gloriously shining—the key of the White Country. Joyfully he opened the gate and passed to the Elysian Fields.

Oh, foolish men and blind, know that the keys of Janus are without number. Wrought into cunning double shapes are they of every created thing, both in heaven and in earth. Janus, the

strange wise god, Janus, the keeper of the keys, Janus, god of gates, is immortal.

The song of the Sibyl is ended.

INTRODUCTION.

IT was a cold afternoon in February. The short daylight was fading fast from a little fishing hamlet on the French coast, a hamlet lying far beyond the beaten track of the ordinary tourist, and possessed of a certain wild beauty of its own. Hand in hand, time and nature had hollowed the rocky cliffs into a horse-shoe shaped cove, where a miniature fleet of boats might lie hidden at anchor unperceived by any passing ship.

The hamlet itself consisted of some dozen cottages inhabited by the fisher-folk. Standing a little back from the sea, on a grassy plateau at the top of the cliff, these houses formed a friendly cluster, their discoloured walls and lichen-stained roofs showing the impress of the rough weather which often passed over them.

Far below, lying half *perdu* in the very curve of the horse-shoe cove, nestled a solitary château, and in front of this dwelling place, gleaming strangely in the rays of the setting sun, stood up a few scattered grave stones. It would seem that the château possessed a graveyard instead of a garden. The headstones were frosted by the salt of high tides, and whiter still with the droppings of sea birds.

Built into the living rock, and apparently forgotten; shadowed and darkened by the sombre walls of the cliff at the back; fronted by the graveyard, and set here all alone, for ever facing the incoming sea, the house wore a melancholy look. Here a priest had once lived, but *pow-a-days* of what use could be the presence of a priest, when the tiny chapel (built many years ago by the Comte de Follet, of blessed memory), had long since been swallowed up by the encroachments of the sea. Yet the memory of the vanished chapel lingered enshrined as a legend in the hearts of the fisher-folk, nay, in time of storm and distress could not the superstitious still hear the chapel bell ringing faintly and sweetly above the angry thunder of the surges?

A sensation of mystery and of awe often filled the simple minds of

the fishermen when they steered their boats through the narrow entrance of the cove, into a shadowy darkness, where the precipices of cliffs swept round on three sides, and well-nigh locked out the bright dazzle of the sea beyond.

At the present time the white château was inhabited by its owner, Aimée Claire, Comtesse de Follet. The lady had known much tribulation, the fisher-folk said, and sorrow had wrought in her nature a craving for solitude. Attended by a few faithful servants she had lived on, year after year, in almost unbroken retirement, seldom stirring abroad, save to sit on the beach of the cove, or to visit the sick poor of the hamlet: the sole happiness of her shadowed life appearing to be centred in the companionship of a little grandson who shared her home. The child was only half French: Madame de Follet's daughter had married an Englishman, and had died soon after the birth of her baby. The race of the De Follets seemed nearly extinct, and this boy, the last of the line, bore an English name.

On the February afternoon of which I am writing, the Countess might have been seen in the cove. Seated on a fallen tombstone she was gazing out to sea. Her hands were folded one over the other, her whole figure was absolutely still; the steady concentration of her gaze betrayed expectancy. The long grey cloak which she wore could not hide the natural grace of her carriage; but time, so gentle to some beauty, had treated this woman's cruelly; scattering white locks amongst her fair tresses, and tracing lines and hollows on the oval of her face; while the closely fitting hood drawn over her head served as a frame for the unutterable sadness of the dark eyes set beneath it.

The Countess had sat thus for nearly half an hour, when down the rocky path which led from the cove to the top of the cliff there came suddenly the shrill, sweet sound of a whistle. In another moment a fair haired, slender boy made his appearance. In his right hand he carried a little packet of papers; his left arm was bound up in a handkerchief. Upon his nearer approach the Countess turned her head and spoke: her voice was clear and soft, but touched just now with some anxiety.

"What have you done to your wrist, Paul? Have you hurt yourself?"

"Indeed, no, grandmother, it's nothing much," said the boy care-

lessly, undoing the extemporised bandage and displaying an arm with an ugly cut and bruise upon it.

"You have had another tumble?" Paul nodded. Drawing nearer and leaning one arm on his grandmother's lap he poured out a whole list of adventures. He had been out on the great ledge of the cliff getting birds' eggs, and had fallen and skinned his wrist: he had climbed down into a wild place following Fanchon, the goat; on his way home he had found a fresh cave in the rocks, and had sat there, writing, till he had come to the end of his paper. All this and much more he poured out while the Countess sat listening. When he paused to take breath she passed gentle fingers over the disordered curls that hung in French fashion on his neck.

"Writing," she said, "always writing: you use your pencil too much, little one."

"I must write, I must read," said the boy: "when I am grown up I mean to be a great savant, a great man, like my grandfather."

Madame de Follet's lips twitched. "You would be an author?" she said. "Ah, child, that means many weary years of work and a tired brain, and then——" Here she paused, and the boy's voice broke in eagerly, "Then what, grandmother?"

"Then failure," she said. "For one writer who makes a name, many hundreds go under foot."

Paul stuck his square chin in the air and his eyes sparkled.

"Cowards fail," he said, "but I—I mean to succeed. Grandmother, are you cold that you shiver so?"

"Yes, I am cold, it is no matter," she said. "I have been waiting for the boat. It is late this afternoon."

There was a sudden suggestion of tension and of nervousness now in her voice, and once again her eyes sought the narrow entrance to the little cove, where the gulls were flitting to and fro, and one dying shaft of sunlight lay long on the water, like the sword of the angel at the gate of Paradise.

The two formed a strange contrast; the child with his eager, determined expression, and the careworn, sorrowful woman, with failure written on every line of her face. So posed, they might have stood for Hope and Disaster.

Presently she spoke again: "What have you been writing about, Paul?"

"I was writing a fresh ending to the Dryad of Hans Andersen; grandmother."

"Do you think you can improve upon Andersen, little one?"

"I have been making the Dryad end happily. I have been giving her a soul," said the boy. "She ought to have had one, if she could sin, and suffer, and be sorry. Why did Andersen make her sorry, if it was all of no use? I wouldn't have let her die like that. I would have spared her if I could. It was too cruel."

Upon the imaginative mind of the child the mythical and pathetic figure of Andersen's creation seemed to have taken strange hold; nay, more, in some indefinable manner his speech appealed to the suppressed undercurrent of Madame de Follet's own thoughts.

"Alas!" she said, "more often than not the safety of the weak demands the death of the strong. And some strong natures do not give themselves to death easily. And others, Dryad-like, can only help themselves; and for some lives even help comes all too late."

The ring of pain and distress in the usually quiet voice startled Paul. Slipping the crumpled papers into his pocket he sprang to his feet. The afternoon lights were paling every moment, grey wreaths of sea mist were rolling up the beach: it seemed to the boy as if his grandmother's grey, cloaked figure suddenly became dim and unreal; unreal as those very shifting mists of the shore. For the first time in his young life a vague uneasiness and fear swept over him, and as he stood thus, perplexed and dismayed, the quick ear of the Countess caught a sound at the entrance of the cove, the even splash of a pair of oars.

A shiver ran over her, for a moment her cold fingers clasped the colder marble of the headstone at her side, then almost sharply she spoke again. "Go, child," she said, "run in at once. Tell Louise to prepare your tea."

The boy needed no second bidding; as he sped lightly over the pebbly shingle, a boat, dark as a sea raven, flitted through the narrow opening of the cove, and grounded upon the beach.

At sight of the waiting figure by the tombstone the rowers bared their heads, while an elderly man-servant, who seemed to have steered the small craft, now jumped ashore and approached his mistress. From a larger fishing village some miles down the coast he had brought a letter. Twice a week Madame de Follet's boat

visited the port of Les Graces, bringing away the necessities of life, and at longer intervals some news of the outside world.

After delivering the letter the serving man stood waiting, while the rowers dragged their boat higher up the beach, and disappeared from sight by the winding path which ascended the cliff.

At the end of a few minutes the Countess became conscious that the old servant's wistful glance still rested upon her: she moved uneasily, speaking with some impatience: "Go, Blaise, there is nothing more that you can do for me."

Thus dismissed the old man took his way to the White House. The thought of the letter that he had delivered weighed upon his mind: he had mentally shaken his head over it all the way from Les Graces. The envelope was directed in a bold masculine hand, and bore an English postmark.

As the sound of the retreating footsteps died away Madame de Follet's whole figure tottered: sinking upon her knees she wound her arm round the cold headstone, while a faint whisper escaped from between her lips.

"The safety of the weak demands the death of the strong, and some natures do not give themselves to death easily."

The wintry twilight faded into darkness, the stars came out one by one; like some stricken creature the Countess knelt on in the graveyard all alone.

"Oh, God!" she murmured at last, "if I have sinned, I have suffered; spare me this."

Only the silence answered her; desparingly she raised her head, looking up at the stars, and they shone down calm, grand and unapproachable; to the woman's sad heart the sobbing of the waves on the shore sounded more human. The army of the sea-mist drew nearer, and its long fingers crept from the fissures in the rocks, like the picture of the groping hands of destiny searching through a rent for the clue of life.

After a time the moon rose, shining down on the wet shingle of the beach, and threading the sea fog with ladders of trembling silver. The wandering rays travelling onwards, palely illuminated Madame de Follet's figure, and lighted into sudden distinctness the black lettering of the headstone against which she leaned; clearly and vividly the inscription started into sight:—

"THIS SPOT IS SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
CLAIRE DE FOLLET,

ONLY CHILD OF THOMAS AND AIMÉE DE FOLLET, AND WIFE OF JOHN GODWIN,
OF GODWIN'S REST, IN THE COUNTY OF——, ENGLAND.

She was born in Paris ; married in Rome ; and died at La Navette,
in the nineteenth year of her age."

"THE SINS OF THE FATHERS SHALL BE VISITED UPON THE CHILDREN."

* * * * *

A curious inscription ! One only, out of many, for every grave in the little cove bore the name of a De Follet. These white memorials of a vanished race, of a line nearly extinct, what hopes did they cover ; what youthful life and love, and beauty ; what tears of sorrow, of defeat, aye, and of despair. If the De Follets had wandered over the earth during life, destiny had led them back, one after another, to find a last resting place in the graveyard of the vanished chapel. Unnoticed and forgotten they lay here, hidden away for ever from the movement and stir of the world.

And still the lady of the White House knelt on amongst her dead.

By and by a light appeared at the château window which fronted the sea. It would seem that Madame de Follet knew this signal, that she dared to linger no longer. Rising painfully from her cramped position, with a visible reluctance in every step she took her way homewards.

The door of the White House was ajar. Upon the entrance of the Countess an elderly woman made her appearance with traces of tears only too visible on her rosy wrinkled cheeks.

"The child's things are all packed, Madame," said she, "if you will direct the box. I had much ado to keep the little one quiet, but he guesses nothing."

"No, my good Louise, he certainly guesses nothing. I have kept silence as much for his sake as for my own ; but now, I must delay no longer."

Crossing the hall as she spoke, the Countess moved down a long passage, and pushing open a door entered her own sitting-room. Here there were none of the tokens to be seen which usually betray a woman's presence. No work-basket, no flowers, not even a piano ; properly speaking this room should have been called a study. Rare

works in Latin and Greek and Hebrew, treasures that would have delighted a *savant*, lay scattered about on various tables. The Countess, presumably cared only for books. But her eyes did not rest upon them this evening, rather travelled straight to the fireside where her grandson was seated. He made a fair picture, set like a ray of sunlight amid old world surroundings.

Madame de Follet's own cloak was faded and worn, but the child's dress was costly to extravagance. There were lace ruffles in his sleeves, and the tiny diamond buckles on his shoes flashed fire. On the rug at his feet lay a dog, a French poodle, that pricked up his ears expectantly at the opening of the door. The boy did not move : he was deep in his book. In the down-bent absorbed face, time had re-lit almost too brilliantly the beauty that shone only in extinction on the face of the Countess. The great grey eyes, the broad brow, the crisp waves of golden hair would have filled any mother's heart with pride ; but the blue veins on the temples showed too plainly, and the transparent fairness of the complexion suggested delicacy.

As the lady of the White House had stood by the tombstone gazing out to sea, so now she stood gazing at the child. And all this time there lay in the pocket of her dress the unopened English letter.

The intent magnetic glance gradually penetrated the boy's dream. Flinging back the hair from his brow he looked up, a glad exclamation breaking from his lips. Louise had given him his tea half an hour ago, he said, and he had changed his out-door suit by the parlour fire. Louise would not let him go to his own room. She was very tiresome to-day. He would be eleven years old in July, yet she treated him like a child.

A faint smile crossed Madame de Follet's lips at this speech. Moving to the fire she stood there for a few minutes warming her hands. "So you will be eleven years old in July," said she, "since you are getting so big, how would you like to take a journey?"

Paul's eyes opened wide at this suggestion, while his grandmother continued speaking in the monotonous voice of a person who has conned their sentences over beforehand.

"Your father has written to me several times lately ; he thinks it is only right that you should pay him a visit."

"Do you mean that we are likely to go to England, grandmother?"

"More than likely, it is all settled, Paul ; we shall probably start in a day or two."

The boy's eyes opened wider than before. This announcement sounded too astonishing to be credited just at first.

"I think it will be very pleasant," he said at last. "I have always wanted to go a real journey, and I shall like to see my father. Grandmother, shall we be able to take Bellissima with us?"

At the sound of its name, the poodle looked up, equally, with its young master, seeming to await an answer to this important question.

"Yes, Bellissima will go with us," was the reply. "And now, Paul, that I have given you something to think about, you must amuse yourself for a while."

Turning her back on her grandson, and seating herself at a table, the Countess took the English letter from her pocket and tore it open. Upon herself she could inflict any pain, but even now at the last moment, she drew back, inwardly troubled at the mere thought of casting a shadow on the child-life which had twined so closely round her own.

There was a long silence in the room. Paul, excited by the news he had received, no longer cared to read. Abandoning his book he knelt down on the rug by Bellissima. Boy and dog were soon busily exchanging mute signs. The two had many things in common, indeed most animals can play at "dumb crambo" better than their masters. By and by, even this occupation began to grow wearisome. If his grandmother were really busy she sat strangely still, Paul thought; but then she was always quiet, and always sad, and often very silent; he could never remember her otherwise. It seemed equally a matter of course that Louise, the housekeeper, should nearly always be cheerful, and talk about nothing all day long; but that too was Louise's way. In the midst of these meditations his grandmother's voice broke suddenly on his ears "Paul, come to me."

As the boy approached she turned half round and lifted him up into her lap, drawing his head down upon her shoulder the while, so that he could not see her face.

Her affection was not usually of a demonstrative kind. Once again Paul became conscious of a vague uneasiness.

"How long do we stay in England, you and I, grandmother," he asked.

"Oh! a good while, little one. Your father is English, it is natural that he should wish you to learn English ways."

"My mother was French, I am half French myself, my father

cannot alter that," said Paul, with some unexpected vehemence in his voice.

"Maybe he will wish you to forget it, Paul."

"You and I are so happy together," said the boy, "I do not want to stay too long with my father; when shall we come back here again, grandmother?"

The Countess gathered herself together.

"Your mother being dead, your father has the best right to you, child; he wishes you to live with him."

"And you, grandmother, then you will live with us?"

The eager voice, touched with a sudden swift dread, how it troubled her.

The inevitable moment had come; like a necessary operation, the pain could not be deferred, and must be undergone. She drew the child closer.

"Paul," she said, "I must come back here. It is hard for me to part with you; but we must be brave, little one."

Paul's breath came quick and short.

"But not always, grandmother. Surely my father does not wish me to live in England always?"

"Yes, Paul, he does wish it; when you are older you will understand things better. I, of all people, have the least right to keep you here."

A strange mingling of remorse and humility sounded in her voice. Paul could bear no more. Slipping to the floor, he stood for one moment quivering with a mighty effort at self-repression, then dashing away, and flinging himself down by the side of the poodle, he buried his face in the animal's coat and sobbed as if his heart would break.

He loved his grandmother, as childhood loves; deeply, passionately. He loved the daily scrambles among the rocks; the frequent rows with Blaise and the fishermen, in the old boat: the pleasant lessons, the cosy room full of books, where no harsh words ever entered; above all Madame de Follet's presence. Was she not the central pivot round which his daily work revolved; and now his world lay in pieces. It was hard, incredible.

Had there been any rebellion in Paul's grief it would have been easier to combat; but the despair in every line of the slight figure might have cut any woman to the heart. Roused by the boy's sobs

the poodle stirred uneasily, and began licking the tears from the half hidden face ; whining and wagging its tail in sympathy.

Madame de Follet's own eyes were dim. Crossing the room, and once more lifting the child into her lap, she strove by every means in her power to soothe the storm she had raised.

She painted the new home in glowing colours, and spoke of Paul's two little cousins—twin sisters who lived with their widowed mother at Godwin's Rest, and who would be sure to prove themselves pleasant play-fellows. She described the house itself, and attempted to rouse the boy's curiosity by a description of the bed in which the great Queen Elizabeth had once slept ; finally, seeing that all this well-meant consolation fell wide of the mark, she changed her tone.

"Child," she said, "this thing is hard, both for you and for me ; but it is the will of God, and since He orders our lives, we must obey. Do you think for any other reason that I could wish to send you from me ?"

These words were not without effect. Perhaps the very vehemence of Paul's grief had by this time exhausted him. He grew outwardly quieter, and his naturally unselfish disposition asserted itself.

"I will go, if I must," he said. "But you, grandmother, I do not like to think of you all by yourself."

"I shall do well enough, little one ; I have my books, and the sick fisher-folk, and other things besides."

Paul's lips quivered. "Some day I shall come back here to live ; some day I shall see you again ?"

The Countess looked at the piteous little face with exceeding tenderness.

"You will never be able to come back here to live, Paul, but, some day, when you are of age, you will be able to come to see me, if you wish to do so ; but it would be better not," she ended, half beneath her breath.

Faint though it was, Paul caught the whisper.

"Grandmother," he said, "grandmother, do you *wish* me to forget you ?"

The despair in his voice startled and moved her, shaking her composure as nothing had yet done. Twice she endeavoured to reply, but her lips refused to utter the words they strove to frame. Even had she spoken, it would have been useless ; looking up for one moment Paul's eyes held hers, reading an answer that could not

be hidden. His whole expression changed. His face lighting up, became radiant, I had almost said inspired.

"I can wait," he said, "I will wait ; but, when I am a man, then I shall come back here to see you."

As his voice had been full of despair, now it rang out with all a child's unbounded hopefulness, and with something more besides :
"If it is my father who wants me to forget you I shall never love him," he went on.

"Hush ! hush !" said the Countess—she spoke slowly now and with some apparent difficulty. "Perhaps—I mean, it is possible that your father may not wish you to forget anything. I should have told you more of him long ago, but the past has been so sad that I have tried to put it from me. My silence has been to blame ; nothing else. Though you cannot remember your father, he loves you very dearly."

"Does he ?" said Paul wistfully.

"Why, yes, Paul : he would have sent for you long ago if it had not been for the Italian war. Your father has always followed Garibaldi, and he would be fighting now if it were not for his wounds, and the loss of his arm ; and though he has lived in England for the last six months, he has been ill all the time. He is only just beginning to get better. He has suffered terribly."

Paul began to look interested.

"Suffered dreadfully, and lost an arm ;" he repeated, "then my father is a hero !"

"Without doubt ; but to my mind, Paul, your father was a hero before ever he went into the war."

"See," she continued, "I have a story to tell you. Your father is a poor man now ; but your English grandfather was once very rich ; lord of a great manor, and of many estates, and servants and horses ; too many horses for racing, and he spent too much money. He and your uncle (your father's younger brother) lived a very gay life, and so did your uncle's young Italian wife ; but their kind of pleasure did not suit your father. He used to be a great deal at sea, cruising about from place to place, with his cousin the Duke of Harebrook. Your father had a yacht of his own then, and he never guessed how much money your grandfather, and uncle and aunt were wasting ; or perhaps he guessed and could do nothing, and that may have been why he did not live at home. This state of affairs went on for

a time till your grandfather died very suddenly, and left debts behind him, enormous debts."

"My English grandfather must have been a very wicked man," said Paul gravely.

"It was all very sad, but we must not judge the dead. Your father loved Godwin's Chase and the house where he had hoped to live; but he parted with the estates, he sold nearly everything, in order to pay all these debts. He only kept the old Dower House and the farm belonging to it for himself, and for a while he let the house and farm to strangers, and he and your uncle went off together as volunteers to help Garibaldi. After a year of hardship and of fighting, your uncle was killed in battle. I think he was always full of regret that he had helped to ruin your father's prospects; but some people's self-reproach comes too late! Your aunt was in Rome when your uncle died, but from that time your father sent her back to England to live, and she has been at Godwin's Rest ever since. Only a year after your father landed in Italy you were born, and your mother became very ill, and so I brought her back to France."

Madame de Follet's voice faltered.

"I wish I could remember my mother," said Paul, half to himself.

"She was very beautiful," said the Countess, "and very brave. She used to work in the hospitals amongst the sick, that was how your father came to know her. She nursed him when he received his first wound. He always said that she saved his life, and after he recovered they were married. For one whole year her life was all happiness; then she died when you were only three months old, and your father left you to my care while he went on fighting."

"Yes, I know," said Paul, "but oh, I wish my mother had lived; I wish everything could be different, don't you?"

"No, never wish that," she answered, with a note of terror in her voice. "Never wish everything to be different. If your mother had lived she would always have suffered. Knowing this you could not wish her back. Troubles must come to everyone, and your first trial has come to you now; but always, Paul, when you are far away from me, I want you to remember that we are not put here to understand everything that happens to us, but to obey orders."

"Yes, I will try," said Paul gravely, "but, grandmother," he paused a moment, "grandmother, why can't we know?"

The old riddle of life, the question of the Sphinx falling afresh from the lips of a child.

"Why?" said the Countess gently. "Why, Paul, I think it must be for the same reason that I keep the answers to your sums when I set you the questions; a key saves all trouble, and life would be worth nothing without discipline. Do you remember what I read to you only yesterday? 'We are all journeying towards eternity, where we shall see the truth face to face.' And it is only when our journey comes to an end, that we shall find out how short it has been in reality. We shall have the key some day, but before we can be trusted with it, we must first learn our lesson."

A flash of understanding shone for a moment in Paul's grey eyes; then, winding his arms round his grandmother, he hid his face in her neck. The very touch of those slight fingers brought a dull pain to her heart. If, indeed, the journey looks short at the end of life; at the beginning the road may easily seem long to the childish feet that have never thought of travelling.

These two, so soon to be parted, sat on together by the fire till the clock on the mantelpiece striking nine announced that Paul's bed time was long past.

Reluctantly enough the boy bade his grandmother good night. He slept in a little room opening out of this larger one, when he did sleep. This evening the grey eyes showed no drowsiness in their depths.

Left to herself, the Countess moved over to the hearthrug and picked up the book which Paul had been reading earlier in the evening. It was a little known sixteenth century English play called *Alcirat*, a play likely to exercise a haunting influence upon some few minds, since it carried stamped upon its every page that rare quality, beloved by Matthew Arnold—distinction. A book that would always be read and treasured by the few, but one that would never be popular with the many; not a child's book at all, and yet Paul, whose grandmother, half French, half English by birth, had already taught him the fluent use of both tongues, had read it through more than once; and it was this thought that deepened the sadness on her face to night. Paul's was a peculiar nature; sensitive, retentive and reserved. In the new English home would anyone understand the boy as she understood him?

It was with very lingering fingers that she put *Alcirat* back into Paul's own particular shelf.

How empty the room looked without the little figure on the rug ! The shadows of change and separation had taken visible shape, and were seated on either side the hearth to-night.

The man Paul might possibly return some day ; the child who was leaving *La Navette* could never come back again.

Madame de Follet's reflections were interrupted at the end of a few minutes by the entrance of Louise. An expression of vexation was plainly visible on the old servant's face.

" Well, Louise ? " said her mistress, expectantly.

" Planchet is below, Madame. He says that his wife is taken worse. It hails, it storms outside. Madame will not go out again to-night."

But the Countess had already risen. " It is not far," she said, " besides, I promised Planchet that I would come if need be. Bring me my cloak, Louise, and make all the haste you can."

Grumbling audibly the old servant obeyed.

Planchet was a great imbecile, and selfish like all the fisher-folk ; perhaps some day they might learn to regret their behaviour when they had killed Madame amongst them.

The lady of the White House paid no heed to these remarks. She was in that state of mind to which movement of any kind comes as a relief. Yet, all through her cold walk, and her tendance of the sick woman, her heart grew heavier and heavier, and the memory of Paul's shadowed tear-stained face haunted her persistently, refusing to be banished.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when her footsteps were once more turned homewards, and later still when she reached the White House. Louise meeting her in the hall, broke out now into open remonstrance, remonstrance tinged with surprise.

" Ah, Madame you do too much ! Had I my will I would have put you to bed and to rest three hours ago. I fancied that you had come in already, and were with the child. I thought that I heard voices upstairs half an hour since."

" I am only just back, my good Louise."

Still the old servant looked incredulous.

" I could have sworn, Madame, that someone went down the passage ; my ears do not often deceive me."

" Perhaps you heard Blaise," said her mistress rather wearily.

" Blaise has not stirred from the fire all the evening, Madame. Besides the footsteps were too light. I fear——"

The sentence was never finished. At that instant, startling all the echoes of the quiet house into a sudden shuddering distinctness, there rang out on the air a shriek, wild and piercing; the shriek of a child in mortal terror!

That cry might have been Madame de Follet's death warrant! The fleeting colour brought by the sharp night wind faded from her cheek, and an ashen hue took its place.

"Someone went down the passage! Oh, my God!" she said. Then, leaving Louise, trembling, helpless and appalled, she turned away, and with a shadow of horror dark upon her face, raced down the narrow entry like a woman possessed.

Bursting open the door of the little sitting room, she entered, but almost at the threshold something stayed her footsteps.

Just inside the doorway, clad only in his nightdress as if he had gained the exit and there stumbled and fallen, lay the child.

Bending down, with hands that trembled, the Countess turned the white face to the light.

At this moment the door communicating with the inner room opened more widely, and a figure made its appearance. The figure of a man, gaunt, worn to a shadow, with dark eyes deep set under darker brows.

The wavering light from the lamp fell upon him, showing a face which wore an expression of strange exultation.

Crossing the floor to within a few paces of the kneeling woman, this man came to a sudden halt.

"Your protection comes too late," he said.

"What have you done?" she cried. "What have you done?"

The broken sound of her voice vibrated through the room; in that one terrible moment she aged visibly.

"The child is no coward, ask him," he said, indicating by a gesture the pathetic helpless figure at her feet. Then, with an unexpected movement, he flung the French window wide open, and disappeared into the night.

Ask the child! The words came to Madame de Follet's ears like a hideous mockery. A great sob, the seal of her despair broke from her lips, as she drew the boy's cold cheek against her own, and laid one hand on the closed eyes.

"Paul, I am here, look up, speak to me! You are safe now, little one. Oh! had I known of this danger, I would never have left you for all the sick in the world!"

At the sound of the loved voice, at the touch of the protecting hand, a faint tremor, a stir passed over Paul's set features. Next, slowly and painfully he freed himself from his grandmother's embrace, and rose to his feet. Lifting his head he looked up. There was no recognition in his glance; trance-like, unseeingly it wandered into space. Such a look might proceed from an innocent soul, haunted and tortured by a vision of the fiend; and before this unseeing gaze the tender speech of the Countess faltered and died into silence. It seemed as if the shadow of horror in the eyes of the woman had taken veritable shape in the eyes of the child.

For a moment the two stood side by side, resembling those visionary figures encountered sometimes in a dream, needing only a touch to break the spell of their presence.

Suddenly Paul spoke, stretching out his hands like a person in the dark. "I have sworn," he said, "I have sworn a vow; and I have seen a spirit." Then he fell forward, fainting into Madame de Follet's arms.

(To be continued.)

The Meed of Love,

BY MRS. AMY WOOD.

I.

"THEN you have never mentioned it, or spoken about it in any way to him?"

The young woman looked up quickly.

"You forget—I love him," she said simply.

An expression of infinite pity passed over the elder woman's face.

"Ailsa, Ailsa, you are but a child still! Love and trust—blind trust, must not always go hand in hand. Don't you know what the world is saying?"

"Yes—but—he is my husband."

The elder woman moved a little closer and took her hand in hers; she looked out of the window as she spoke.

"Some women think that the men they have married will hold the tie as sacred as they themselves do, Ailsa—against all odds."

But the younger woman drew her hand gently away.

"That doesn't apply to me, dear. I have never insisted on that word 'marriage.' That is where the great mistake comes into most women's lives," she said thoughtfully. "They make it mean a slavery and a keeping in bondage. To us, my husband and me, it has meant a little world of freedom—and it shall be so still, let the outside world say what it will; *I* understand—that is enough!" A little pale smile flitted over her face. "I know that men require more than one woman can as a rule give them, and that they are tempted to go elsewhere for the rest? If only people would look at it more calmly it would be better for us. Should we wives think ourselves perfect in every particular? I am not even pretty." The elder woman looked into the sweet expressive face and thought, "no, not pretty, something infinitely more fascinating, and lasting, and lovable than pretty." "And," the younger woman continued slowly, "he admires beauty whenever he sees it—even as I do! This woman is very beautiful."

"Ailsa, why do you try to convince yourself? It will not stop with admiration. If men were content to admire there would be fewer tragedies in the world," the elder woman said bitterly, "but they must touch and handle till the beauty becomes common and familiar in their sight; then, when it is too late, they cry for the days when they admired—those days never return."

"He will be always content to admire—he loves me," the young woman said softly.

"But if he is not content? Supposing—for men are strange creatures, Ailsa, and beauty can make them forget love, and home, and the associations of a lifetime—only supposing your husband left you for the beauty of another woman, left you and went with her far away altogether, what would you do, Ailsa, what would you do?"

The younger woman clasped her hands tightly on her knee, and looked straight before her.

"If a man once loves his wife, not all the lovely women in the world can keep him from her long," she said dreamily.

Two footmen came in quietly with tea, and while they arranged it with delicate niceness beside their mistress, the two women talked easily and lightly of a dinner party at which they had been the previous evening. The younger woman's hands moved gently among the tea-cups, and it was fully a minute after the men had left the

room before she met the elder woman's anxious gaze. Then she said steadily,

"What would I do, Mildred? I would wait till he came back to me. I would never doubt that he loved me, I would just wait. And if he was long in coming—very long—I would call him back to my side. I would say, 'Come, the boy and I want you—we love you—come!' and he would come!"

"Words, Ailsa, nothing but words!" the elder woman said sadly. "If he came, do you think you could forget, or could make him forget? Don't turn away, Ailsa. You *must* listen. When he spoke tenderly to you, he would remember that just those same words he had spoken to *her*, when he caressed you, her face," the younger woman grew white to the lips, "would come between you, and the kiss would grow cold in the giving. When he drew the boy to his side——" the younger woman's breath came sharply.

"Stop," she cried, "I know all you would say—all! I have gone over it, oh yes! I have gone over it!" She rose and walked up and down hurriedly.

The elder woman's face grew more and yet more pitiful as she watched her, but it was not finished yet—God knows, it was Devil's work, but it must be done.

"Ailsa, if such a thing happened to a wife, it must be best to forget him utterly—utterly! There must be no remembrances—no coming back—no waiting, or any more trusting—it must be an end, an——"

"Mildred!" The younger woman paused in her walking up and down, and in her eyes there was a great fear, "something has happened! he——?"

"He went away with her this morning. He sent me a note asking me to come and tell you myself—I, I have done it very badly—Ailsa—don't look like that, dear! Ailsa——!"

II.

"And I say, for her own sake, she's a fool not to get a divorce."

"How many times have I forbidden you to mention my wife?" he said sharply.

"Oh, of course, she's altogether too pure for me *or* you to speak of," she sneered.

The man got up from his unfinished breakfast with an oath. The woman watched him with a smile on her lips as he turned his back on her and looked out of the window.

"She's afraid you should marry me," she said mockingly.

The man turned quickly. "Marry *you*? Good God!"

He laughed harshly as he looked out of the window again. But he saw nothing of the bright sunlight, or the gaily dressed people. He only saw his wife's face, and his heart beat chokingly as it told him—even as it had told him every day since he left her, two weary months ago—what he had lost!

The woman rose and slipped her arm through his.

"What shall we do to-day?"

He did not seem to be aware of her presence. She withdrew her arm pettishly.

"What did you run away with me for, if you loved her best all along?"

He heard then.

"Do you want telling again?"

He turned her face full to the light and examined her calmly, dispassionately. She moved uneasily.

"I was under the impression that a beautiful face would be a desirable possession. It never occurred to me that the awful emptiness of it would pall in a week. I never loved you at all; how could I? I was blind, mad, and only thought of your beauty—beauty?" He laughed shortly. "My wife has more beauty in her little finger than you have in your whole body—because she's a woman, and you—well! you're *not*!"

She wrenched herself free and burst into a flood of angry tears. He looked on perfectly unmoved—perhaps such scenes were too common. He went back to the breakfast table and turned over a little pile of letters. Suddenly the writing of one brought the blood to his face with a rush. He tore it open and read. Presently, in her curiosity, the woman forgot to sob.

"Have you been left a fortune that you look so—so foolish," she said at last.

The man started. "No—yes—I mean; it's all over."

"What's all over," she said sharply; she had never seen that look in his face before.

"I am going back to my wife," he said quietly.

She laughed shrilly. "The saint's going to take you back? Good Lord!" She looked at him searchingly, "and what am I to do?"

He looked beyond her, he did not even hear her.

"And what am I to do?" she repeated in a hard voice.

He frowned slightly, then he read over again some of the wonderful words softly to himself. "And I think you will only feel gladness at being back, dear. The boy asks when you are coming almost as constantly as my own heart. We have had the boat done up, and yesterday, as we danced over the waves and the salt air blew in our faces, the boy laughed aloud and said, 'This is better than our grand place in London, eh, little mother? and isn't father getting very tired of business and hot streets and towns?' And he would not rest content till I promised him I would write, and tell you that the boy, and the birds, and the fish, and the little brown woman (his own words) wanted you badly. . . . Do you remember our long tramps over the moors last year? The boy is big enough to come with us now, and it pleases him mightily to carry old Mac's gun. . . . Our life and the boys are still before us, so come darling, and let us live them together. Let us forget everything of gaslight and towns, and be our own selves again! The boy and I want you, we love you, come, sweetheart, come!"

"What am I to do?"

The woman's voice broke in harshly on his dreams of the boy and the little brown woman, and the keen smell of the sea.

"You?" he said vaguely.

"Yes, I," then she continued defiantly, "I have claims and——"

"They shall all be satisfied," he said coldly.

She looked at him curiously. Well, perhaps it was best. He would pay handsomely, and she was tired, deadly tired of his queer temper and his superiority. Besides, she yearned more and more, day by day, for the flesh-pots of Egypt—the smell of the footlights—the coarse and manifold admiration, night after night, as of old! Yes, certainly it was best so, but—

In a few days, he mused, he would be standing in front of *her*, ashamed to look in her great true eyes, but she would hold out her arms and say softly, "Husband!" That would be all; he knew her—it would be all forgotten, even as she said in her letter, but he would never forget—Ailsa, grand little woman! And the boy would drag at his hand and say impatiently, "Isn't she just the dearest little mother in the whole world? (had he not taught him the very words?)

and why don't you kiss her father?" and he would look in her eyes, and then—

"Are you going to-day?" the woman asked suddenly.

He looked up dreamily.

"Eh? Oh, yes, at once!" Then his thoughts rushed back in a tumult to his wife. How they would walk knee-deep in the heather, and every now and then she would rub her cheek against his sleeve (she hated a rough coat), and they would talk softly of the boy and the future, and if it would be fair weather to-morrow! How they would pull the little boat out of the shelter of the creek into the gentle lapping waves, while the boy would babble of the fish he would catch with his very own line. How, as the night grew near, they would go hand in hand into the boy's room and watch him as he slept, noting the long lashes, and the flushed cheeks, and the brown hair, *hers*, tossed back on the pillow; how she would stoop down and kiss the rosy lips and how he would kiss her. How—oh, it was endless! His eyes grew dim; Ailsa, I am coming, coming.

* * *

Two days later a man, grey faced and weary eyed, stood looking at a little gaily painted boat drawn up high on the shingle, while a lad explained simply how it had happened.

"And you will remember how my father managed a boat better than anyone on the island," he said proudly, "they never went without him;" he paused a moment and dashed his hand across his eyes. "We sat up all night, but they never returned—only the little boat came in with the tide this day—only the little boat indeed; my father and the sweet lady and the little boy will never return—they will never return. I helped her into the boat, and she laughed at me and said, 'but her husband's strong arms should help her the morn,' those were her words, sir—and now, now——" The lad broke down.

The man shook his fist at the sea.

"Oh, you brute! you awful brute!" then he laughed.

The boy looked at him wistfully, but he had his own dead to mourn for. Without a word he went silently away, and the man was alone—alone with the grey sky above him, and the grey sea before him—alone with the little boat and God.

Notices of New Books.

As we read Lord Roberts' book, "FORTY-ONE YEARS IN INDIA," published by Messrs. Richard Bentley, it is not extravagant to say we hear the boom of cannon, the tramp of soldiers, the music of war, the martial beat of drums, and, alas! the groans of the wounded and dying victims. Every chapter of these two interesting volumes is a startling account of adventurous service—a permanent record of what British Arms have achieved under circumstances of unparalleled difficulties. It would, of course, be quite impossible, within the narrow limits of a few paragraphs, to review any portion of the career of such a man as Lord Roberts, or speak in adequate terms of praise of his book. From beginning to end, culminating in the grand achievement of his march across Afghanistan, from Kabul to Kandahar, with the utter defeat of Ayub Khan, which seated the present ruler, Amir Abdul Rahman, on the Afghan throne, we have one series of campaigns. Both these handsome volumes have been read through with increasing interest, and for soldier or civilian we think no work of a military character could show a more dazzling record of glorious achievements than we have here presented for our perusal, and it is safe to predict for the volumes a lasting place among the historical records of our country.

After having read Mr. Barrie's book, "MARGARET OGILVY," (Hodder and Stoughton) there is no need to wonder why the author chose this way of honouring the memory of his mother. He could have erected no more worthy, no more appropriate, or lasting memorial to her than the one which we have before us in the shape of this little biography, full of tender reminiscence and love, which the overwhelming sorrow of death has only served to mature. Perhaps the chief note in the work is one of pathos; yet we can still enjoy the gleams of quiet humour that brighten a work which might otherwise have been characterized as somewhat morbid: it is, however, incorrect to think of the heroine's life as dominated by a ring of sadness; we find, rather, a simple, hopeful merry nature, calmed as it were by a great grief. Each chapter, almost every page, seems to give us a fresh photograph of our heroine, but had we even space to quote some of the choicest passages, the best selection

could give but a poor idea of the book as a whole. Then there is the charming glimpse of Margaret Ogilvy as a little girl, and again "at the age they make heroines of," and once more as the mother reading a little paper written by her son, viz., "Dead these twenty years." Leaving behind pictures full of the most exquisite pathos we come to the closing tragedy, if such it can be called. "They knew now that she was dying. She told them to fold up the christening robe and almost sharply she watched them put it away, and then for some time she talked of the long lovely life that had been hers, and of Him to whom she owed it. She said good-bye to them all, and at last turned her face to the side where her best-beloved had lain, and for over an hour she prayed. They only caught the words now and again, and the last they heard were 'God' and 'love.' I think God was smiling when He took her to Him, as He had so often smiled at her during those seventy-six years."

The latest of the "Famous Scots" Series (Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier) is "**JAMES BOSWELL**," the man who "yet wears the crown of indivisible supremacy in biography." We could ill afford to spare this name from the very interesting monographs which are being produced from time to time, in such cheap, but elegant form by Messrs. Oliphant.

To be the writer of the life of Dr. Samuel Johnson alone entitles him to a place amongst the famous men of his own or any other country. In his matchless biography we have revealed to us the mind of Johnson, that vast storehouse of accumulated knowledge. He was a man who gathered laboriously and who scattered profusely.

In the "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides" Boswell gives, in minute detail, every virtue that graced, and every fault that dimmed, the name and fame of his honored friend. He was also not unsparing in dealing with Johnson's numerous and striking peculiarities, but these he handled in a manner not altogether unloving. We delight in this classic work of Boswell's, and cordially welcome a new life of our old friend.

The exceedingly pleasant, easy manner in which Mr. Keith Leask deals with the subject of his memoir, makes us feel after a perusal of the book, that we know Boswell better, that our interest in him has had an impetus given to it, and that this is, in a great measure, due to the tact and ability in which the characteristics of James Boswell have been portrayed for us by his latest biographer.

E. R.

The Drama.

READERS of Mr. Stanley Weyman's novel *Under the Red Robe* will naturally expect thrilling incidents and a good play, and truly a dramatic treat awaits them in the piece now running at the Haymarket. From the opening interview with Richelieu to the closing scene where the great Cardinal again figures on the stage, the interest is sustained throughout and the audience held fairly spell-bound. The scene in Act III, where the old dumb servitor is tortured to disclose his master's hiding place, is one of almost painful intensity, and certainly Mr. E. Holman Clark, who represents the old man Clon, most ably enacts the role. The part of Captain Larolle is ably sustained by Cyril Maude, and affords full scope for the clever acting of this artist. Mr. Herbert Waring, as Gil de Berault, the hero-villain of the piece, is powerful throughout, and when we add that Miss Winifred Emery is the stage heroine of the play, it can readily be imagined that the drama lacks nothing either as regards the interest of the story or the caste. Mr. Edward Rose is to be congratulated on his adaptation of the novel.

The original drama in four acts, now produced for the first time on any stage, at the Olympic theatre, is a happy combination of humour and tragedy; the first act closing on a well enacted crime. The audience by their emphatic denunciation of the indispensable "bold bad man," amply testified to the good acting of the typical villain in the person of Mr. Edward O'Niell, who sustained the role of Julian Annesley with considerable ability, while the representative of the "Chicago Chanticleer"—Mr. W. L. Abingdon—scores a great success, and his most humorous campaign on behalf of gleaning news for the "Chanticleer," afforded the audience in every part of the house, unmistakable delight.

The Eider Down Quilt at Terry's Theatre is a great success. Mr. Arthur Playfair as Captain Bernard, Mr. H. De Lange as Alberto da Bologna, and Miss Fanny Brough as Patricia, would almost alone suffice to command success. Indeed, Mr. Arthur Playfair's season at Terry's Theatre is likely to be prolonged, judging from the popularity of the present comedy.

M. W.

LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1897.

"Forbidden."

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of "PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST," "NO COMPROMISE,"
"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.

FALCONER AIRS HIS VIEWS.

SEVERAL people came to dinner that night, and the master of the house exerted himself to be unusually agreeable. The difference of opinion which was always growing more deeply marked between the husband and wife was apparent in the arrangements. The waiting was rather slow, for half the footmen were absent. Beatrice in the early days of their married life had effected a compromise for the satisfaction of her conscience. If Lord Falconer insisted on having a Sunday dinner party, she also insisted that the men who wished to go to church should be permitted to do so. Some allowances were to be made for a Bishop's daughter, he reflected, so he gave in, at least for a time, and only swore under his breath when anything went wrong.

Beatrice puzzled her husband completely that night. They had not met except in public, as he had come in late, only just in time to dress, when she had already left her room. She had plenty of smiles for everyone else, but she seemed determined to keep him out in the cold. He was not conscious of having done any wrong. It was not his fault if Sartoris was out, and it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world to take "the poor little woman" for a drive before he dropped her at her sister's in Jermyn Street. Besides, Beatrice knew nothing about it. They were great friends, he and Nina, and he was not going to give her up for anybody. He put down his glass with a thump, as he made this resolution, and

Lady Crosby, who was sitting next him, looked up in surprise. "Did you want to break it?" she asked with an air of innocence.

"If I did, it's my own," he said, in the half sullen way that was habitual to him. "Every man may do what he likes with what belongs to him."

"A dangerous theory, Lord Falconer! If I were your wife, I shouldn't like it at all."

"When I had once broken you in, we should get along famously," looking straight into her pretty vacuous eyes, with his slow smile.

"Ah, but the breaking in! Digby never managed it, and you wouldn't succeed any better," her golden head put coquettishly on one side, and a provoking smile on her lips.

"If I tried, I bet I should succeed—don't give in to women as a rule."

"I suppose Beatrice twists you round her finger," with a glance towards the other end of the table.

"Look like a man to be twisted, don't I?" with a short laugh. "Milk and water sort of fellow, with a limp bit of gutta serena for a backbone?"

"Precisely," and then she added with an involuntary little shudder, "Do you know, Lord Falconer, I wonder that anyone had the pluck to marry you."

He took it as a compliment, and his heavy eyes brightened, "I took care to ask one who had plenty of pluck. Bee could face the devil himself without turning a hair."

"I don't doubt it—after you," she added under her breath.

"You and she are great allies I hear; I'm glad of it. Between you and me," dropping his voice, "her own set are frightfully slow. Feel as if I had a weight at the top of my head whenever I come across them."

"It's the most ludicrous thing in the world to think of you with a Bishop in tow," her blue eyes twinkling. She knew precisely what sort of a man he was—only a well-grown animal with fierce passions and no principles, and the gulf between him and his father-in-law seemed as huge as the vast Unknown.

"I cut all that," he said confidentially, "and we get on famously because we never meet."

"Still the Bishop will always be in the background, so you will have to be pretty careful," she went on mischievously, not objecting

to irritate him, as he happened to be somebody else's husband and not her own.

"Hang the Bishop! I shall do exactly as I please," angrily.

"Everybody will be citing you as the model husband," with another provoking smile.

"The pattern will be an original one," grimly.

"I suppose it will, because model husbands have gone out—so the papers tell us," she answered coolly.

"Look here, I depend on you, Lady Crosby, to help Bee to get rid of some of her old-fashioned notions. You go ahead, don't you?"

"I don't know"—hesitating as to whether she ought to be offended or not.

"Oh, yes, you do," he said cheerfully. "Now Bee's the best little woman in the world, but she's a trifle prudish—absurd you know as my wife."

"I quite agree with you," biting her lips to keep in her laughter.

"I want you just to teach her her way about."

"I see—but it will be just like a cartoon in 'Punch'—an angel of innocence in the centre, with frivolity tugging at her with all her might, whilst an ecclesiastical dignitary hangs on to her skirts. Oh, Lord Falconer, why *did* you marry a Bishop's daughter?"

He looked down at the table, and a tinge of red came into his cheeks. "Because I liked her better than any other man's daughter."

"Yes, but it's very inconvenient," as if the responsibility were almost too much for her.

There was a pause, he looked at his wife again, and felt as if he had been talking high treason. Evidently she was making herself very agreeable to Baron Varicourt, an Austrian Secretary of Legation on her right, as well as to Major Mortimer on her left. She was dressed in a deep shade of gold with a dark red rose nestling in her chiffon, and the colour suited well with the purity of her complexion and the darkness of her hair. She would not throw one glance in his direction but she was very lavish with her smiles on either side, and the Austrian seemed as if he could scarcely detach his eyes from her face.

Why should he wish her altered? Why should he wish her lowered to a level with the women of the fashionable world? Was not she far better as she was? A thousand times, he answered

promptly but he could not always be stretching after her on tip toe. He did not want an angel—he wanted a woman—and nothing but a woman—a good woman, of course—one whom he could be sure of under all circumstances; but at the same time she must look with a tolerating eye on all his own irregularities. He was not aware that there was anything impracticable in these wishes, though put into plain English, he wanted a model of virtue to look down with cheerful affection upon an exemplar of vice—and the deluded man actually thought that he might get it!

As the dinner progressed, his irritation increased. Beatrice seemed to be still unaware of his existence, although she was performing her duties as hostess in an admirable manner. On the surface of things there was absolutely nothing to find fault with, and Lady Crosby watched the gathering cloud on his face with puzzled eyes. She could only account for it by supposing that he was jealous of the Austrian; but yet, as he had wished his wife to take a leaf out of her book, this seemed outrageously unreasonable, for flirtation was her natural element. Sir Digby made up his mind to it, and being a philosophic man, bore it with equanimity. But there was nothing in the least philosophic about Lord Falconer, and if he were going to be jealous on every opportunity, then she would never undertake the job of freeing his wife from any remnants of prudery.

The party broke up early, Lady Crosby remarking that she always tried to make up on Sunday for the compulsory late hours of the rest of the week. She was uneasy in her mind as she stood before her cheval-glass critically examining the cut of her dress, which had been made after a perfectly new design. It fitted her small round waist without a crease; and the pale blue velvet folds which formed the top of a low bodice, set off the exquisite fairness of her neck. Diamonds glittered amongst her sunny curls, and on her breast amongst the pale blue folds; and altogether, with her pretty face, her well-shaped head, the beautiful curve of her long, white throat, she made a tolerably perfect picture of physical beauty. She was a very mundane Eve, and therefore fully appreciated by the Adams of her own generation. Wherever she went they sought her out and made much of her; and it was safely predicted concerning her that if there were only one solitary specimen of the male sex at a ball, that man would be found dancing with Sir Digby's wife.

She prized this popularity as other women value their diamonds,

and she would not have exchanged it for a duchess's coronet. Perhaps she prized it all the more because it could never be reckoned on as a dead certainty. It might go at any moment, and once gone, no power on earth could call it back. Therefore she must strain every nerve to keep it up, whilst she seemed to be accepting it carelessly as her acknowledged right. Other women were often a dreadful nuisance to her, but she was wise enough to see that no woman can float safely on the social wave who has none but men on her side. So she cultivated the feminine sex with small acts of good-nature, which gave her little trouble, and brought a sure reward. She knew that some effort must be made to atone for the sin of being usually the best dressed woman at any gathering; and rather than give up her gowns, she was willing to go in for conciliation on all sides. In this she was generally successful, and many highly respectable dowagers, who liked her pretty ways and pleasant manners, said there was no harm whatever in Millicent Crosby, though she was certainly "a little too flighty for their tastes."

"A little too flighty" (a mild term indeed for a woman whom Lord Falconer had called "go ahead"). As she thought over all that he had said and suggested on this point, she told herself that she ought to pull up. His approval absolutely scared her—What was it? she asked herself in trepidation, for Sir Digby would not stay away for ever, and she did not want any ugly stories to be poured into his ear by some jealous cat as soon as he set foot in England. Was it Mortie? Poor old fellow, he had taken to dropping in rather often, but it was so difficult to snub him; a man who won't take a snub with dignity, but flies into a passion and demands a furious explanation, is such a difficult subject for a chilling-off treatment. But she would try, indeed she would. She made this resolution as a salve to her conscience, although she had small hope of being able to carry it out, and went to bed in a virtuous state of mind.

CHAPTER X.

A SPECIMEN OF MODERN OLD AGE.

BEATRICE succeeded very well in London society. All her husband's grand relations were only too glad to welcome her as Falconer's most respectable bride. She was a pleasant surprise

to them, for everyone had prophesied that he would marry a barmaid, or the daughter of a bookmaker, or billiard-marker—a person whom they would have to ignore like old age or any other disagreeable fact. That he should choose a Kennard, and that a Kennard should let herself be chosen, seemed as incredible as that the Queen should go to a ballet at the Alhambra; but when they found that it really had happened, a smile of relief and satisfaction went round the circle. Falconer was safely disposed of, and there was some faint hope that he might turn out something better than a disgrace to his family. That he could be a credit to it never entered their heads.

The Marchioness of Malvern lived at 33 Queen Anne's Gate, if not exactly in the odour of sanctity, at least with a strong flavour of respectability about one side of her. She went to church every Sunday and raved about her favourite preachers; she even threw in a missionary meeting now and then amongst her numerous engagements, and gave liberally to the charities which appealed most effectually to her compassion; and down in the Shires, she had a racing-stud under the management of Mr. Pointer, the well-known trainer, in which she took the warmest interest.

She was old, and lean, and withered, but yet she was to be noticed at every ball to which she could get an invitation, in a low dress with the Malvern diamonds sparkling on her parchment skin; and at every fashionable race-meeting she might be seen as well, tablet and pencil in hand, her blue eyes as bright as ever, looking out under the brim of her girlish hat for the horses she had already backed, or the colours she had begun to favour.

A kindly, eccentric old woman, with a broad view of life, un-narrowed by inconvenient prejudices, she was immensely popular—not with those of her own age, but with the younger generation. Young people voted her capital fun; her contemporaries, jealous of her success, and not approving of the way by which she obtained it, said she was “an old fool, and at her age she ought to have known better.”

From the first she took a great interest in Falconer's bride, and watched her progress with anxiety. She looked upon her nephew as a dark horse, and she had strong doubts of his staying power on a course of respectability. “Like father, like son,” she said grimly, “and what can you expect of my brother's progeny? He was the

worst man I ever knew, and I daresay he has bequeathed his vices as well as his features to his son."

"Let us hope that the Kennard virtues will have a counteracting influence," a Canon's wife said in her soothing voice. She always wished well to everybody, and hoped the best, but her optimistic views had an irritating effect on practical Lady Malvern, especially when she could see no grounds for them.

"Humph! you may hope it if you like, and if you can," she rejoined in a tone of irritation. "But wouldn't you think me a fool if I started across the Channel with a hole in the bottom of my boat, and *hoped* to get safely to the other side?"

Mrs. Abingdon's smooth face wore an indulgent smile, "I should think you very foolish for starting if you had no hope at all."

"Maria, you are too aggravating," and the old woman laughed. "Whenever I open the front gates for you, you sneak out by the back-door."

"Evasion is the policy of neutrals, and as this is not a family question with me, I am bound to be neutral or nothing," Mrs. Abingdon said complacently, for relationship with Lord Falconer was the last thing she coveted.

"But I thought you knew the bride?" looking sharply into the benignant face, which became perceptibly pinker.

"Yes, of course—a sweet girl—so like her dear father, I always went to St. Peter's if I knew he was going to preach. Such a flow of words—and yet so practical. Did you ever hear him?"

"No I didn't," Lady Malvern said drily, determined not to have the subject turned till she herself chose to change it. "Now that he isn't there any longer to run after, are you going to drop the girl?"

"Drop her? Oh *dear* no. But you see she has gone completely out of our set, and situated as we are at the Abbey—I don't know quite how to follow it up," rising from her seat and throwing a longing glance at the door.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed the Marchioness, who was always rather casual in her language. "Curzon Street is no distance from Dean's Yard, and you needn't take the whole Abbey on your back when you go there. She is in great request for all bazaars," she added cunningly, for she knew that Mrs. Abingdon was plotting a "Sale of work" for "Converts in Caffraria,"—"people are sharp

enough to know that a pretty face brings more money out of young men's pockets, than any amount of charity out of old women's purses."

"So Mr. Pemberton says—but I have a better opinion of human nature," rejoined the Canon's wife cheerfully. "The first thing is to have a good object."

"Not a bit of it," with keen contempt. "The object is nothing. Do you mean to say that the young masher who gives five shillings for a rosebud from a pretty girl, would part with five pence to an old frump with a subscription list?"

"I hope so, indeed I hope so," smilingly.

"Then you've no business to," snappishly. "Nobody does anything from a noble motive now—frank selfishness governs the world."

"Dear Lady Malvern, I won't listen to you, or you will send me away in dreadful spirits. Good-bye, I shall call on your niece next week, if I can find a moment," and Mrs. Abingdon hurried away, eager to consult some responsible member of the Committee as to the advisability of inviting the beautiful Lady Falconer to take a stall at the Westminster sale of work.

Lady Malvern gave a contemptuous sniff. "A fig for her friendship—all a matter of self-interest. If Beatrice had red hair and a squint, her dear old friend Mrs. Abingdon would quietly let her drop. I'll go and see how the girl's getting on. She will want me sooner or later if Falconer turns out as I expect."

She drove to Clifford House as soon as the landau came round, but was annoyed to find the room full of visitors.

Beatrice gave her the seat of honour on the sofa, and made much of her, for she was the only one of her husband's relations to whom she felt drawn. The old lady had taken a fancy to her from the first, and determined to do all in her power to make her *début* as her nephew's wife a success. Her sharp eyes roamed round the room taking stock of all the company. She gave a friendly nod to Lady Crosby in whom she recognised a kindred spirit. The little Beauty she knew was trying to get as much fun out of life as she could, and that was just what she herself had done long years ago, when her hair was gold instead of silver, and her heart like a well-prepared garden, made for every pretty flower to take root in. But what a very odd crop had grown up! She was thinking it over

placidly as she sipped her tea, and even gave a passing regret to the poorness of the cream, a very odd crop indeed ; but, thank goodness, it was quite forgotten now, and if it had done her harm, at least it had done this amount of good as well, for it had endowed her with a vast amount of charity for the peccadilloes of the young and flighty. And they needed charity to save them from the abyss of not deserving it. No one knew this better than the old woman who had done everything—seen everything, and gone everywhere, when her arms were round and not skinny, when her face was like a blush rose instead of a withered leaf, when her heart was throbbing with the strong vitality of youth and not dried up like a walnut of last year's. She had known it all—as she flirted, and danced, and laughed and loved—the wild longings—the crazy hopes—the bewildering successes—the frantic disappointments—she had known how to bear her triumphs without losing her head, and how to hide defeats so that no one should suspect them. And when the time for romance and illusion was gone, when the prosaic period usually sets in, she had taken to baccarat and horse racing, and found in them a *sauce piquante* for what seemed at first the tasteless dish of elderly life.

A sudden thought crossed her mind as she chatted with Major Mortimer, who had detached himself from Lady Crosby's side directly he met the glance of the Marchioness's knowing eye. She would ask Beatrice and Falconer down to Ethelred Hall for the November shooting. Then she could keep her eye on them both, and see if there were any hope of his developing into a decent husband. She would give him a chance at all events, and if he chose to throw it away she could not help it. It was her duty to stand by her nephew and his wife, but it is probable that she would have turned her bony back upon her duty if she had not been so delighted with Beatrice, for under no circumstances could she be called a slave to it. If duty came hand in hand with pleasure, then Lady Malvern became very conscientious ; but if, on the contrary, duty dropped pleasure and picked up boredom, then she passed on with her nose in the air, and her spectacles in her pocket.

As soon as they were alone, she mooted the project, and had a spasm of amusement when Beatrice thanked her quietly, and added that she would tell her husband, as if it were a matter of doubt whether he would accept or not. Invitations to Ethelred Hall were

canvassed for as eagerly as tickets for the Ladies' Cage on the night of the greatest debate of the season; but the old lady only smiled and said, taking consent for granted, "Bring any man you like, you know; Millie Crosby will bring the Major of course, and Vere Haughton the Baronet."

"But I shall have my husband," the bride remarked with wide-open eyes.

"Of course you will, my dear," rather testily, "but the extra man is to prevent uncomfortableness. If you haven't anyone but Falconer you will have to take somebody else's husband, and some wives don't like it. Don't I remember," knotting up her wrinkled forehead, "a well set up, good-looking young fellow, who seemed to be your tame cat the other day?"

"Hugh Pemberton?" exclaimed Beatrice, as a light broke over her face. "He's like a brother to me—I've known him all my life."

"Then he mayn't be the domestic animal I took him for, but bring him by all means. I don't suppose he will object to look after you, to pick your flowers—or to be your partner at golf or in the ballroom. You couldn't expect Falconer to do these things for his own wife, you know."

"No?" inquiringly.

"And if you don't bring your own man, you will have to take some other woman's property, and then—Heaven preserve us, for there will be storms from morning to night—and I'm getting too old for that sort of thing," she concluded with a wry face, as if the taste of a sour plum were in her mouth. Old age was the only thing she had ever dreaded, and she meant to keep it at bay till she died.

"It was so good of you to come and see me," Beatrice said gratefully, as she watched the bent figure descending the stairs. A younger woman who felt doubtful about the legs would have clutched the bannisters thankfully; but Lady Malvern, lame and unsteady, scorned to touch them. She waited on the landing in front of a conservatory and waved an airy farewell from the tips of her fingers, as she steadied herself for a fresh effort. She thought she was the envied of all beholders with her money, and her influence, and Ethelred Hall as her background; but Beatrice's comment as she looked down upon her with vivid sympathy was, "Poor old thing, I *am* so sorry for her!"

CHAPTER XI.

AN INVITATION TO ETHELRED HALL.

LORD FALCONER looked well pleased when his wife told him of the invitation to Ethelred Hall.

"That will suit us down to the ground," he said cheerfully. "We could not have stayed in London, you see."

"But we've only just come back from Yorkshire," objected Beatrice, "and we are going to St. Christopher's later on—are we always to be moving about?"

Her husband leaned back in his chair, and as he puffed slowly at his pipe seemed to be lost in cogitation.

"Did she tell you what sort of people would be there? She has three sets, you know—the county deadly-slow, the pi-unctuous and solemn, and the fast—as frisky as you like."

"A mixture would be best—stir them up like a pudding and serve on the same dish. That is what I should do, and then we might have some fun," with her cheerful little laugh, as she held up her hat, and studied it critically.

"I believe you could work it if you chose. The old woman's gone on you to any extent."

"Not to that extent," with a shake of her head. "Besides, her party is made up. The Crosbys—" and she ran over a list, winding up with Hugh Pemberton.

Falconer frowned as he muttered an oath. "What has she asked that infernal prig for?"

"Entirely for your sake," with a mischievous glance at his sullen face.

"For mine? Good Heavens!"

"Yes, to relieve you of some of your responsibilities—to do all the little politenesses that you sometimes forget."

"Humph," discontentedly. "Don't let him get in my way, or I will kick him out of it—that I promise you."

"He is not in the least likely to get in your way," gravely. "You and he would never go in for the same objects."

"An angel in trousers, I suppose?" with a sneer.

"Nothing so anomalous," curtly. "Simply a gentleman in the highest sense of the word."

Falconer was silent for several minutes and let this exalted encomium pass without comment. He was fancying himself at Ethelred Hall, with all his kindred spirits absent, his old aunt spying on his movements and that long-faced dragoon ready to report every slip to the Bishop. Deadly dull he began to think it would be, and at once hankered after his friends at St. John's Wood. If Nina Sartoris were there he could amuse himself with her. She understood him, which was one comfort, and she did not expect too much from him, which was another. She never objected to his mode of expressing himself, or tried to drag him up to a higher level of thought, as Bee would sometimes attempt to do in the midst of her fun.

She was content with him just as he was, so there was nothing harassing about her unless she happened to be in a bad temper; and when squalls came, he could always get into a hansom, and leave her behind to make an earthquake, if she chose, in her husband's studio. As a wife she would have been intolerable, but as a friend to be picked up or dropped just as the whim took him, she was more to his style than most women.

Beatrice was already near the door, with her hat in her hand, when he took his pipe out to make a remark. "Did she say anything about asking the Sartoris's?"

Instantly she drew herself up, and looked an inch taller. Her eyes blazed with indignant surprise, but her tone was icy. "No, she did not."

"She used to do the Lady Patroness to Sartoris—buy his pictures, and that sort of thing. They are in rather low water just now, I fancy. A change would do them good."

Such Christian benevolence Falconer was rarely guilty of towards his friends: for as long as he had his own round of enjoyments, he had not imagination enough to worry himself about other people's. His own pleasure was like a concrete fact placed straight before his eyes, but his neighbour's pleasure might be said to belong to the region of speculation, and he rarely thought it worth while to speculate except on a card or a horse.

"Let them take it then," Beatrice said very quietly, "but not under the same roof with me."

She left the room at once, latching the door behind her. Falconer sprang to his feet in a perfect fury of passion, such as he had never

indulged in since his marriage. He glared at the closed door, as if he had half a mind to follow her, but the other half kept him where he was. A coarse brutal jest occurred to him, and he uttered it, but as there was no one there to hear it, it did no harm—except to himself.

In the hall he met his wife coming downstairs in her hat and feather boa. He had come out of the smoking-room ready to assert his rights, and to be as offensive as possible on the slightest sign of resentment, but as soon as she caught sight of him, she smiled up into his sullen face, and said cheerfully, "I am going to tea with Lady Crosby, shall I give her your love?"

Beatrice's smile was something to be glad of. It lighted up her whole face, and made her beauty irresistible. Even Falconer's heavy nature responded to her charm, and suddenly losing his ill-temper, he said gruffly, "Give her it all if you like—don't believe you care for it now."

"Falcon!" with a glance that meant a page and a half of tenderest reproach.

He would have kissed her if it had not been for the footmen at the door, but at least he accompanied her to the carriage, an attention he did not often pay her, and gave her a good-humoured nod as she drove off. He walked away, wondering at himself, whilst a pair of girls watching from an opposite window said to each other, "Darby and Joan still? I couldn't have believed it. We gave them a month at the most, and they've taken five. I call it quite old-fashioned."

"Not up to date, at any rate," replied the first with an actual pout—a cynic of eighteen!

CHAPTER XII.

SOCIETY IN A COUNTRY HOUSE.

ETHELRED HALL was a sort of "Holiday House" for grown-ups—a solid substantial building of no particular style of architecture, but rather a medley of all-picturesque, because of its irregularity, which broke out now and then into curious gable-ends and quaintly castellated windows. In order to prevent a carping critic from making too much of its defects it was covered with a network of

creepers. The roses and passion-flowers had followed in the train of the evanescent summer, but there were still a few strands of glorified Virginia creeper left to brighten up the sober ivy; and in its age—its quaintness—and general aspect of cheerful hospitality—it seemed an appropriate home for its eccentric mistress.

The Falconers arrived after the first gong had sounded, so there was no time for anything except to dress for dinner as quickly as possible. Beatrice was full of pleasant anticipation—ready to admire or to be admired, willing to amuse or to be amused, a model mood for a guest, whilst her husband was willing to enjoy himself if he had what he deemed a sufficient wherewithal; but he was at the same time on the look-out for being bored. And it is always possible to be bored, even under the most agreeable circumstances, if you only try hard enough.

Lady Malvern gave them both a cordial welcome in her best manner, which she reserved for her own house in the first moments of reception. No one could beat her in the way she received her guests, and made the shyest—if there was such an anomaly—feel quite at home. "Going to shoot?" she asked her nephew in the course of the evening when the best manner had worn off, and before the usual move into the billiard room had come on.

"Hope so. Birds pretty fit?"

"Plenty of them. There was no shooting here, you know, in October—so you have the pick. Are you anything of a shot? I forget," carelessly.

Lord Falconer grinned. "I don't often muff, I bring down my bird, if I have a chance."

"That's all right. I hate people who miss, and abuse the keepers, the dogs, the weather—anything but their own stupidity. Your first shot at matrimony was a good one," and a softened expression came over the worldly-wise face, as she gave an appreciative glance at Beatrice, who in her pure white frock formed an ornamental part of a lively group consisting of Millie Crosby, Major Mortimer, and a few others.

"You talk as if I were likely to make a second," he said, studying the group, and wondering if "the little Crosby" had forgotten his injunctions.

"Mark my words," and Lady Malvern uplifted her fan impressively, "a second would be a mistake."

"Well, you see, there couldn't be a second, so long as Bee's alive, and she's very much alive at present, I can tell you," he added, looking amused.

"She would have to be dead—or you would have to be divorced, there is that alternative, you know," she said as coolly as if she were talking of measles.

"Confoundedly unpleasant both of them," he said with an uneasy laugh. "Why should you talk of such horrors?"

"Which do you prefer?" she persisted, peering up into his disconcerted face.

"Anything rather than the first," hastily, as Beatrice threw him a smile in the midst of the lively chatter, as if to show that she had not forgotten him.

"You would rather she were alive and miserable? Just like the selfishness of man."

"Why miserable?" he asked with excusable irritation. "She has an excellent time—everything she wants—I don't stint her in pin-money, and I let her do exactly as she likes."

"Yes, because for a wonder she likes to do exactly as she ought. Pity you didn't marry Millie Crosby, she is more your style," with a crooked smile, as she slowly fanned herself, with an air of deliberation.

"Thanks! A woman who throws herself at every man she meets, and is never content without a dozen in her wake?" he exclaimed in a burst of virtuous indignation. "I should have punched her head long ago."

Lady Malvern laughed her usual little cackle. "No doubt, but you wouldn't have broken her heart, because she hasn't such a thing. Your wife has."

"I know it," in a low voice.

"Poor child, and you will break it, you know you will—you must. It is as inevitable as winter and all other unpleasantnesses."

"I know nothing of the sort," angrily. "We are the best friends possible."

"Wonderful—for six months," sarcastically.

"Six years or twelve. What will you bet me?" he said quietly.

"Anything—Ethelred Hall for instance, or my black pearls—I should feel quite safe. Now go to your smoke and your billiards—

if you want to—I must go and scold somebody else.” She moved off with the long train trailing behind her, which she always futilely hoped would hide her lameness.

Falconer looked after her with a shrug of his shoulders. “Would Beatrice ever be like that painted, befrizzled, low-necked scarecrow?” he wondered. “Faugh! What a pity it was that women ever grew old!”

“What are you thinking of?” Major Mortimer remarked *en passant*.

“Thinking that if I had the ordering of the world, I’d draw the line at old women.”

“And take away the last hope of the impecunious youth of the present day. When American heiresses fail, there is nothing else to fall back upon but moneyed old women.”

“You haven’t tried either of them yourself.”

“No—I’m not on sale,” shortly, as he leant against the wall looking straight in front of him, and yet seeing a glint of golden hair in the lamp-light, and the turn of a small fair head.

“Perhaps you are in pawn?” suggested Falconer.

The Major made no answer, but he drew his eyebrows together, as he folded his arms. The observation rankled. What had Falconer meant by it? Probably nothing—a random remark sent out as a neat response to his own, without any secret suggestion. And yet it seemed to describe his situation with an uncomfortable distinctness. The more he thought over it, the more irritated he became. It sounded such a mean sort of position for a man who was anything of a man to occupy. And yet—he had drifted into it, and settled himself down in it with pride and pleasure; and it was left to Falconer, of all people in the world, to rouse him to a sense of its unworthiness. Oh the satire of it!

Millie Crosby tripped across the room in her gauzy azure gown looking like a forget-me-not on the wing. “Who is for baccarat?”

“Who plays?” asked the Major, avoiding the glance that she cast on him.

“I do, isn’t that enough?” she answered audaciously, trading unwisely on her vaunted popularity.

“Too much,” he answered quietly “with everybody looking on; I am for billiards.”

Her blue eyes opened so far, that their long lashes were no longer

any good to them. "Very well, Major Mortimer," she said in a low tone of infinite meaning, and she walked away as proud as any pea-hen, who has borrowed her husband's tail.

Frederick Mortimer sauntered off to the billiard-room with a well got-up air of indifference, but his play that night was execrable, and virtue met with its usual reward—a succession of misfortunes. He missed the most palpable canons, the enemy's ball would constantly tremble on the edge of a pocket and yet obstinately refuse to go in, whilst his own seemed to have a special attribute for getting itself tucked under the cushion where he could do nothing with it. Although more than an average player, he lost every game and his temper as well; and finished up in the small hours, out of humour with everybody, and woefully out of pocket.

The next morning at breakfast, Millie Crosby came down looking pleased with herself and with most of the world besides. But she ate and drank, and chaffed, and laughed, apparently in utter ignorance of Major Mortimer's existence. His gravity was so imperturbable and so aggressive, that Beatrice in her inexperience wondered that Lady Crosby took no notice of it. His one idea was haste; there was no pleasant dawdling over another cup of coffee, no dallying with any of the fairer sex. "Come, you fellows, do look sharp. We don't want to start after half the morning's gone," he would say at intervals. His example was infectious. The men pulled themselves together, and became alert and business-like. They ate their breakfasts, as if they had no other object in the world, except to consume as much as they could in a given time: and the women had to talk "sport" and nothing else, if they wished to claim their attention.

Millie had made herself look as much like a man as she could and was only supportable because of her exceedingly feminine face and figure. She had her twenty-bore gun, Norfolk jacket and pot hat, a short leather-bound skirt, and a pair of high Hessian boots.

"Wanted a safe man," she said, peering through her pince-nez, as they all stood in a group under the wide portico.

"Try Falconer," whispered Sir Henry Brown with a knowing look. "Only for Heaven's sake, don't put him out."

"Won't do. I haven't time to insure my life," she said tranquilly. She was wanting Major Mortimer to come forward and ask

her to stand next to him, in order that she might refuse. But he knew what to expect, and wisely refrained.

"Aren't you coming, Lady Falconer?" Sir Henry asked as they were just moving off.

She was standing rather apart, her large eyes following her husband's tall figure, and did not answer him. Why should people talk of him as if he were a sort of first cousin to the King of Benin?

(To be continued.)

The Ideal House.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

IN THE MATTER OF FURNISHING.

I CAME across a volume of poems the other day, the work of a very minor poet. It reminded me of the way in which a great many people furnish their houses. As I turned page after page I was struck by touches of old familiar lines, as if the author had thoroughly saturated himself with certain famous poems and distinct styles, and had then set out to give an example of each, off his own bat, as it were. The opening poem started off with Tennyson's "Sea Dreams," then slipped in less than three pages into Longfellow's "Driftwood," and Lewis Carroll's "Walrus and the Carpenter," without the humour, mean-dered after that into Wordsworth's "We are Seven," and ended at last in a reflection of "The Ancient Mariner." And so on all through the volume. Now one came across the tender ring of "Enoch Arden," then stumbled over a wholly incomprehensible echo of the least understandable parts of Browning; now lighted on Macaulay's smooth and easy running lines, then Swinburne's passionate swing and rhythm. In all the volume there was but one short poem which clearly and altogether reflected the author—of that I could make neither head nor tail.

Now this is precisely the way in which some people furnish their houses. They have no ideas of their own. Turn them adrift with so much money to spend in one of the great furnishing emporiums (it is

not a pretty word, but somehow it conveys the idea of a big furniture shop perfectly), and they would sit down aghast and helpless and would end in furnishing a house somewhat as the good man, who insisted on being his own architect, planned out a house and forgot the staircase.

They would not have the least idea what to buy; they would not, could not, bring themselves to pick and choose, a bit here, a piece there, and to choose so that their selection should form one harmonious whole.

Therefore an Angelina of this type seldom attempts to use her own judgment, but she goes about with her eyes open and she says to her Edwin—"Don't you think Mrs. Smith's drawing-room is sweetly pretty? I should like to have mine like that."

It is not impossible that Angelina's drawing-room is to be found somewhere in West Kensington or Fulham, and that Mrs. Smith's address is De Vere Gardens or Kensington Court; so when the white or yellow drawing-room is reproduced, it is a very long way after the original model, and has usually an unaccustomed look about it which is exceedingly uncomfortable and unfriendly. Any room is both uncomfortable and unfriendly-looking which has no personality clearly expressed. You never saw a room set out in an exhibition in which you felt that you could sit down and make yourself thoroughly at home. So a room which is merely an echo of some other room, never quite strikes the right note, there is always something incongruous and out of drawing about it.

Still, if some Angelina with the terrors of house-furnishing before her, is not blessed with originality of ideas, she must perforce take her ideas from someone who does possess them. If she is wise she will put herself in the hands of one of the lady decorators, will show what she already has—for all Angelinas start married life with a stock of more or less valuable odds and ends for the furnishing of their new nests—and will say how much she wishes to spend. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the result will be good, for the lady decorator is generally an artistic woman who has given up her life to the business of arranging houses. But if Angelina does not wish to do this, there are a few golden rules which she ought never to forget.

The first is to have *no fixed rule* in arranging her house.

For instance . . . I know a lady who for years made it an

absolute rule to have none but the most luxurious and easy couches, settees and chairs in her drawing-room. It was an enormous room, exquisitely furnished, its mistress one of the most delightful women I have ever known, but I have seen people, with perhaps a touch of rheumatism in their knees, go into her room and look round with a shudder at the low luxurious chairs and lounges, wondering, poor souls, if they sat down how on earth they would ever get up again. I suggested once to this dear woman that she might have a few higher seats for those less lissome than herself—"Oh, but," said she, "that would quite spoil my drawing-room."

At last, however, a very distinguished old gentleman of enormous size went to see her and for him a big chair out of the hall was of necessity brought in, and—the rule once broken through—other and higher chairs crept in one by one and made the room perfection.

Another golden rule for Angelina is never to adopt a fad because it is a fad!

At one time there was quite an eruption in London drawing-rooms of big Japanese umbrellas. Nothing could be more hideous or foolish, but for a little while it was the fashion, and women who would never have thought of utilizing a very pleasant garden shade for any part of the inside of their houses followed the craze in a futile attempt to be fashionable. Of course, the handsomest room in the whole world would be ruined by a huge paper umbrella set up in the middle thereof, looking as if the lady of the house was afraid the ceiling might shed lime-dust upon herself and her friends.

If Angelina begins her married life in a small villa, terrace, house, or flat, boasting of but a couple of sitting-rooms and four or five bedrooms, she should not attempt to try conclusions with a friend with a house four times the size. For instance, a lady who can keep her drawing-room solely for reception purposes, having also a morning-room and boudoir, can afford to furnish it in pure Empire style. But if Angelina has no other room in which to utilize the pretty blue and gold Japanese screen that cousin Mary gave her for a wedding-present, or the pulkhari that Jack's wife sent home from India, or the antimony vases, all long-legged birds and snakes, that Edwin's little sister chose, why then it is but common sense that she cannot place them against an Empire or Louis Seize background without looking ridiculous.

I must confess that personally I loathe rooms of any distinct style

or period. People in the time of Louis Seize and the Empire were all dressed to match their rooms, and for them they were charming enough—people and background made an harmonious whole. But what does an English tailor-made girl or a man in any modern garments look like against the delicate finery of the Louis Seize or Empire periods? They do have, they only can have, the effect of a jarring note in a harmony.

I have a friend who has a Japanese drawing room. It has cost a mint of money, and contains some almost priceless treasures in the way of inlaid cabinets, and lacquer-work. There are no inconsistencies, excepting the great height of the room and a beautiful piece of statuary in one corner, which, by the way, reposes modestly unobtrusive in a niche cornered off with a lattice-work screen, and, if my memory serves, screened again by hanging curtains of reeded beads. The rest of the superb room is severely Japanese—and the effect when one sees from twenty to thirty ladies and gentlemen in the latest fashion of dinner gowns and swallow-tails is painful in the extreme. I always feel, in that room, that modern dinner dress is positively indecent!

If Angelina is wise she will, as far as her drawing-room goes, eschew any particular style. She will take a little of this, a little of that; she will tie herself to no one colour, to no particular shape or form; she will choose all that conduces to cheerfulness and comfort, and she will not be beguiled away from that principle by any pretty fancies she may see in her friend's rooms, no matter how alluring they may be. Decidedly, comfort and cheerfulness are the watch-words for the furnishing Angelina, and these must be combined with a proper sense of proportion and a fair sense of the eternal fitness of things.

If Angelina's home is to be ideal—really and truly ideal—it will always be strictly subservient to Edwin and Angelina. I heard of an Angelina the other day, who, after five years of married life, was blessed with a little Angelina. Within three months of that baby's birth Angelina was heard one day plaintively declaring: "Dear, dear, dear; my beautiful home will be completely ruined if the perambulator comes in and out like this." The wise Angelina will only build her nest so that it is a comfort to herself and Edwin, she will never put together a home so fine that it is an unceasing burden to her.

If Angelina is unable to afford a parquet floor for her hall, or to

lay down an Eastern carpet of many colours, she need not polish her oilcloth with olive oil and beeswax, until every friend she has dreads a broken limb whenever he or she ventures to cross the threshold. A friend of mine died not long ago, and I confess that the very first thought which shot through my mind on hearing the news was: "I wonder if they will go on polishing that oilcloth now."

If Angelina happens to have inherited a good collection of china, she need not set it round in showcases as if she were starting a bric-a-brac shop.

Angelina should also remember that if she has not much to hang on her walls, she may indulge in brilliantly flowered wall-papers. Neither pictures, nor brackets, or china looks well on a flowery wall, and if such accrued to her when the flowery paper is an accomplished fact, they should only be used when it is possible to set them on some legitimate support, such as a mantelshelf, an overmantel, door mantel, or a frieze or dado rail.

On the other hand, if Angelina has many pictures and pots for the decoration of her walls, she should have as plain and bright a paper as possible. A deep flame-yellow wall, or even a bright rose-coloured one, shows off everything put upon it, and for a dining room there is nothing like a combination of dark oak or Chippendale furniture, with Nankin blue, old Delft or old Spode, against a pale green painted or distempered wall. If there is *enough* of the blue and a few good engravings or paintings no other colour will be needed, excepting the deep red of the window curtains and the red and blue tones of the Turkey carpet. This is a style which looks well alike in the largest and smallest of rooms. Angelinas who have small rooms might remember that a miniature sideboard and dinner waggon—neither of them more than five feet in length—and six or eight chairs, which will not look out of place in a tiny room, will be most useful later on when she has attained to a dining-room of noble dimensions, and has extended the chairs into twenty-four, and added a sideboard eight feet long to the modest suite with which she began. But a large sideboard in a small room is almost as terrible as a very broad stripe on a very little woman.

In short, to have an ideal home, Angelina must always use discretion, she must ever remember the eternal fitness of things. But how often this simple principle is ignored! I went to an afternoon concert given by a certain very great lady not long ago,

and I don't know that I ever saw such an extraordinary lack of the fitness of things in my life. The double drawing-rooms were papered with flame-yellow, the curtains to the many windows were bright scarlet. The division between the two rooms were draped with velvet curtains and were a red of a wholly different tone. The carpet was a deep soft crimson, the chairs, mostly gilded, were upholstered in broad crimson and white striped satin, or in rich red silk damask which went with nothing near it. There were a few pictures, small oil paintings, hung well below the eye-line, and the only ornaments were blue and gold Sèvres, such things as clocks and candelabra, under glass shades. All the sofa cushions were of a brilliant turquoise blue!

The two footmen who hovered in and out wore bright pink stockings and magenta plush breeches. The hostess—a very florid woman—wore a gown of deep crimson satin (wholly different in tone to all the other reds in the room) quite unrelieved by any softening lace or trimming. One daughter wore a lavender dress, the other two had pretty summer frocks of bright apple green.

Now I did not personally know the lady who lived in this house. I only went to a charity concert as part of an audience; but seriously, if I were to meet her to-morrow, I should avoid an introduction to her. She may be good, worthy, and possessed of many virtues; but of charm, of personal sympathy, of attraction of mind and manner, she has none for me. I could not be friends with a woman whose drawing-room would set my teeth on edge every time that I went into it!

(To be continued.)

The Blind Man of San Romè.

By J. BARRETT-KNOX,

Author of "ROBERT TRENT'S DREAM," "HAVRE AND ITS ENVIRONS," "CATCHING A TARTAR," "THE BODY AT NO. FIVE," etc., etc.

PADRE ANTONIO stood under the olive trees and looked across the Borga Valley.

The warm wind played with his thread-bare garments and ruffled his thin grey hair, played more and more roughly, until the old man rested his hands upon the stone wall behind him, and leaning backwards, raised his face to heaven.

How the sunlight flooded the world! The beauty of the olives, with their spring glory of powdery green—the shadows of darkening colour upon the western hill—the tinkling music of the water as it flowed over the wooden troughs, and turned the little wheels on its way to the river below—all the peace and harmony of nature, sank into Don Antonio's heart.

"All ye works of the Lord, Praise ye the Lord," he murmured. "God's work so perfect, and man's?——"

What was man's work?

The memory of the sin, the sorrow, and the suffering in the town below, swept like a vision across his sight, and he rose, as if moved to instant action by the thought.

His footsteps made no sound as he passed through the thick green grass, the tall white flowers nodded in the wind and beckoned him to stay and rest, but he left the shade behind, and stepped into the dusty road and dazzling sunlight glare.

"Santa Lucia! Santa Luci—a!" sang a sweet child's voice, as with spasmodic jerks a little blue figure jumped from stone to stone along the highway's boundary wall, descending with a final spring into the pathway. The dancing feet came to a standstill, the slim brown hands shaded the deep blue eyes, while the little blue figure leant over the wall and eagerly scanned the valley. Then she recommenced singing—"Io vorrei che nella luna ci s'andasse in carrettella."

"If you had a little cart, should you really like to drive to the moon, Anita?"

The child turned, "No, Padre mio, for I must go to Biondino's garden to order flowers for the English signor's carriage. It is to be filled with violets for the Carnival. I promised to wait for Beppo, and see! The shadows begin to climb the hill, but he comes not!"

Padre Antonio smiled. It was no news that Beppo was as usual playing truant.

"You will have to go without him Anita, or gain a scolding for being late."

"Tante Lisa will scold in any case, Padre mio, and I promised to wait until the shadow reached the chestnut tree."

The old Priest laid his thin hand upon the faded blue kerchief, which made so soft a frame to the child's lovely face, and said gently: "Always keep your promises, little one, but be careful what promises you make."

Anita smiled, then bounded forward with an exclamation as Beppo came in sight.

Padre Antonio watched the pair until a turn in the path hid them from view, then, with a softly spoken blessing, pursued his homeward way.

"What made you so late, Beppo? *Subito!* The shadows will have reached the hill top before we get home; even now the moths are at supper; I have watched them for half an hour, darting to and fro as they dipped their long tongues into the flowers."

Beppo did not answer; with a stone in his hand he was creeping towards a sunny spot on the wall, where basked a slender lizard.

Anita clapped her hands, and as the prey vanished, Beppo turned in fury, and hurled the stone with all his strength. "Oibò! take that for your meddling!" Evading the blow, Anita sprang upon the wall and tried to make peace.

"Ecco! Don't be angry. You know I will never, *never* let you kill anything if I can help it. Why are you so cruel Beppo, when you might be so happy? Just try my way to-day, jump upon the other wall, and hold out your arms, so—now shut your eyes. Don't you feel the wind all over you! A stronger puff will blow us away, run Beppo, run. *Avanti!* Race the wind with me to the bottom of the hill." Away sped the slender blue figure, the bare feet making no sound, the arms outspread like sails, while the wind,

entering into the spirit of the race, seemed to help her over the road as it blew the faded skirt in fluttering folds, and swept the soft dark hair round her face in a cloud.

Beppo panted behind, and indeed did not overtake his cousin before she had finished her business with Biondino, but this was ever his way. Was there water to be fetched for his mother, Anita could do it, not he. Was the pile of heavy clothes to be carried up from the river, Beppo would not move a finger to help share the burden.

And yet with all the care he took to save himself trouble, nay, perhaps for that very reason, his life was not a happy one. As if by instinct, children shrank from him, and animals fled at his approach. Even Anita's loving influence seemed powerless to check the growing cruelty of his nature.

His mother was a sharp, hard featured woman, with a keen eye to the future. A restricted, narrow future, he it understood, for "Tante Lisa's" world was a small one.

The circle of her horizon did not extend beyond Anita's house, and the fruitful trees that grew and flourished round it. Within that circle she toiled and planned for the accomplishment of her fixed desire.

Some day, the land with its trees, the old house with its vine-shaded roof, the river with its water wheels, should all belong to Beppo. The girl was an unwelcome addition to the property, but at present she was easily kept in order. For the future?—

Tante Lisa was busily preparing to meet it, with the fixed determination that nothing should change her plan of action.

* * * *

The Carnival was over, had been over for twenty-four hours; but no little blue figure haunted the Via Cavour, offering sweet flowers for sale. No dancing feet pattered along the sea-wall, and Padre Antonio was not the only one who had missed Anita at the Carnival, but he was the only one who went in search of the child.

Up the valley he strolled, leaving the town below, through the olives, up still higher, until at last he sat to rest upon the low stone wall above the shrine of the Madonna, as the shades of the evening fell.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the sound of hurried steps, and down the stone pathway came a flying figure. Could it be

Anita! The white face was drawn and haggard, the blue eyes wild and fixed, the blue kerchief gone from the soft hair, the blue frock torn across her shoulders.

Her breath came in tight short gasps, and she ran as one pursued, with hands outstretched in terror.

Stumbling over a knotted root, she fell heavily at the foot of the shrine, and lay motionless.

Padre Antonio climbed the wall, and kneeling, laid one hand gently upon the clenched fingers, but recoiled suddenly, as, with a scream, the child started to her feet, and staggering against the shrine, held both hands up, palms outwards, as if to protect her face. "Off Beppo! off! Don't touch me! There's blood upon your hands!

No! no! Aunt Lisa, not that! not that! I have not killed him!"

And with another wailing cry of agony, she dropped senseless at the Padre's feet.

In silent pity and indignation, the old Priest raised her in his arms, and with difficulty carried her down the mountain path. Often resting for breath, again staggering on, he at last pushed open the door of a little brown house by the stream, and laid his burden down.

In Maria Vecchi's care Anita could be safely left, while Padre Antonio retraced his steps, not pausing in his search until he had found Tante Lisa. What passed between them no one ever knew, but when the old man once more climbed the mountain road, behind him, in a darkened room, lay Beppo, tossing and moaning, and at the garden gate stood the mother, her hands clenched tightly upon the rough woodwork, her whole body trembling, her face a picture of defiance and despair. For Beppo she had lived, for Beppo she could have died, but not even at the Padre Curato's bidding would she forgive Anita, and the torrent of her hatred and wrath, checked and kept in silence by the old man's presence, gathered strength as it rose higher and higher, sweeping all love and pity out of her anguished heart. . . . During the weeks that followed, the story of the Carnival was gathered by Maria Vecchi, as it fell in disconnected ravings from Anita's fevered lips.

"If Zucci must go to the butcher, don't let Beppo take her."

"Where is Padre Antonio? He would stop you, Beppo. See, see! Her white coat flecked with blood! Beppo, give me the knife. Holy mother, have pity on thy dumb creatures!"

"Beppo! If you stab but once again you go to the Carnival alone. I will not go! I will not earn one *soldo* for you. Off! Beppo. Off! Your hands are stained with blood!"

Alas! as Maria Vecchi knew, it was no uncommon thing to see the boys, with open knife in hand, driving a calf across the market place. Were they treated more cruelly than the lambs, which would be brought from Lucca before Easter, their legs tied together, as they lay packed one upon another in the omnibus that generally carried passengers to and fro, over the rough roads. Did they suffer more than the animals that came to San Romé by train at the end of each week, and were shut into the enclosures at the railway station, and there left without food or water from Saturday until Monday, their cries unheeded and unpitied, except by the flower girl of the Via Cavour, who spent many hours on Sundays in carrying water to each successive thirsty crowd.

Until Anita had been convalescent for ten days, Padre Antonio thought it wise to avoid all discussion of the Carnival, but now, the distorted fever vision of Beppo's accident must be faced, or its shadow would lie for ever across the child's future.

"Tell me, Padre mio, is Beppo really blind? I cannot remember clearly, but Tante Lisa said, when she beat me for spoiling Beppo's life, that it was my fault—if it is true, I shall never be happy again."

The old priest could hardly face the depth of misery in the steadfast blue eyes; his own grew dim, but he answered quietly. "If you *had* spoilt Beppo's life, by accident my child, would you be doing right to let that accident spoil your own life too?"

Nita's attention was roused and diverted from the agony point of Beppo's blindness. She untied her blue kerchief with trembling fingers and turned her face towards the soft wind that was gently tossing the olive boughs. Then she faltered.

"Should I not repent, Padre mio, for what I have done?"

"Yes, Anita, but not for what you have *not* done. The good God gave you your life to use for Him, you must not dare to spoil it. If you had sinned, Tante Lisa's was a sufficiently heavy punishment, but she was unjust, and I have told her so. The slow tears filled Anita's eyes.

"I did not mean to be unkind," she said.

"You were right, Anita, to try and stop Beppo's cruelty, he

has stopped it for himself now, his accident was caused by the kicking of a mule he was teasing, and he fell under a passing carriage."

"He is sorely punished," murmured the child; "never to see the sun again, but to be always, always in the dark! Oh! Padre mio, what can I do?"

"God will show you, my daughter; go on your daily way as hitherto, and who knows but that your hands will lead Beppo from out of the present darkness into the future light."

All thought of self vanished from Anita's mind, and as Padre Antonio drew the trembling little figure to his side, she exclaimed: "To be in the dark each day as well as night! O let us go to him, Padre mio, he cannot hurt anything now, and I shall be able to take care of him, always."——

* * * *

"What o'clock is it, mother?"

"Ecco suona l'orologio! Just six, and Anita not yet returned. You manage your business ill, my son."

"There's no management in it. Anita ever was as stubborn as a mule, and age has taught her wisdom. Why she suffers us to remain here puzzles me!"

"Beppo, you madden me! To what end have I toiled and slaved, if not to see you owner of both house and land. Anita may thank me that everything has been as well cared for as if it were my own."

Beppo laughed. "In truth, mother, you have been more like the girl's own relative, instead of merely her mother's friend!"

Tante Lisa changed colour, but spoke sharply.

"When are you going to make her your wife, Beppo?"

"'Tis not for lack of asking, but for all her *kindness*, she shudders if I do but touch her hand. Once she *were* mine," he added fiercely. "She should feel its weight effectively."

Tante Lisa looked furtively at her son, half hesitating to rouse his evil passions to the point of action, but conscious that her power over Anita was waning.

Another influence was at work upon the girl's steadfast loving nature, and if once she gave herself up to its sway, another arm would guard her rights, and forth from the Eden of her choice would Tante Lisa have to go.

The sting of such a possibility goaded her past all prudence, and

she spoke: "Anita puts you off that she may beckon others on. I'll wager she is walking with Pietro Martini now."

A curse fell from Beppo's lips: he rose, stretching himself to his full height and squaring his thickset shoulders, while a look not good to see passed across his face.

"By San Romé, Pietro is a bold man, if he thinks to rob a hungry dog of his bone! I will settle the question this evening, Anita is coming up the path."

Tante Lisa entered the house, and Beppo hastily sat down again, pulling his soft hat down to hide his face.

Tall, upright and fearless, Anita walked through the orange trees. Was it the evening sunlight that made her face so fair? Or was it the joy in her heart, looking through the "windows of her soul."

The soft blue linen robe clung to her supple figure, the faded kerchief framed her face as of old, but there was a steadfastness of purpose in the dark eyes of the girl, which had only been faintly foreshadowed in the laughing eyes of the child.

A string of coral beads was in her hand, and she sang for very joyousness of heart. Catching sight of Beppo, she paused, and a look of pity swept across her face.

Unconsciously she played into the hands of his evil purpose, as she said, "Will you come for a walk with me, along the Bordeghera road, Beppo? Maria Vecchi is too lame to carry her basket of clean linen to the Grande Hôtel, and I have promised to call and tell M. Duclos, that I will bring it myself to-morrow."

Beppo scowled. "Was it with Maria Vecchi that you have been spending this long afternoon, eh?"

"No, after mass I went to the station, and watered the animals, they were so thirsty. But come, let us start, or it will be dark before we get back again."

Anita guiding Beppo by the arm, they quickly climbed through the olives and then descended the hill to the Grande Hôtel. Beppo was silent until they reached the turn of the road, then seating himself upon the low stone wall, he bade Anita deliver her message and return to him. When left alone, he realised that the next few minutes' action would decide the course of his whole future. His grasp tightened upon the stones. Should he carry out his plan, and by stratagem force Anita to consent, and bend her will to his?

What made him hesitate?

A vision of the past, the thought of Anita's face as he last saw it, pleading against his cruelty in the market place.

Anita's voice broke the silence.

"Beppo—— I would tell you something." She paused, then recoiled in sudden terror at the blazing passion in his blind face.

"Is it of Pietro Martine that you would speak?"

"Si, Beppo." The soft voice had a sound of tenderness unheard before, and it goaded Beppo to fury.

"Go!" he muttered hoarsely. "Go! before I do you a mischief. Leave me, leave me alone, I say." Throwing himself along the wall, he hid his face in his trembling hands. Anita steadied herself against the stones, and waited, knowing that to speak would only add fuel to his passion. "Are you still there? No, I will never walk home with you again, never. Your help I must have to get as far as the railway tunnel. Guiseppe works there, and he will bring me back."

"But, Beppo, you forget that it is Sunday, Guiseppe will not be there."

"I say he *will*. Some rocks have fallen, and the line has to be cleared for the express."

Anita hesitated, she had seen that same vindictive look on Beppo's face, when some tortured animal was escaping from his grasp.

"Beppo——"

"Oh, say no more, Anita, go to Pietro Martini, he has two eyes and can see your charms, the blind man can find his way alone!" Beppo started to his feet, and staggered down the road.

"Holy Mother protect us," murmured Anita. "Stop, Beppo, I will lead you. Here, take my arm, but turn back again, don't go to Guiseppe."

In silence Beppo's fingers closed like a vice upon her wrist, and he hurried forward, not speaking, until he reached the railway, and approached the tunnel's mouth.

"I hear nothing, Beppo; are you sure Guiseppe has not gone?"

"He works at the far end," muttered Beppo, stumbling heavily forward.

The dim evening light only faintly penetrated the tunnel, and Anita paused.

"Call him, Beppo, he must have a lantern, and I cannot see my way any farther."

Beppo did not reply, but his grasp grew heavier upon her slender wrist, as he sank upon a mound and dragged Anita to her knees beside him.

"Beppo, are you ill? Speak to me!" In the silence that followed, Anita could hear the short, quick breathing of her companion, but no noise of distant workmen, and the horrible truth flashed upon her, that she was alone with Beppo in one of his worst fits of mad passion. "Leave go of my wrist, Beppo." She spoke steadily, despite the violent beating of her heart.

Beppo laughed, and the harsh, grating sound echoed through the tunnel. "When you promise to marry me, Anita, then I will let you go."

"How can I promise that, Beppo, when I have pledged my word to Pietro? Ecco! be reasonable, come back with me to Tante Lisa. Guiseppe must have finished his work and gone." Again Beppo laughed.

"Guiseppe has never been here——. A lie, you say? Yes, and a thousand lies would not stop me, if by telling them I could bend you to my will. Here you stay with me all night, and then——"

"Yes, Beppo, and then?" The gentle voice made Beppo waver, but he answered fiercely—

"And then if you do not promise to give up Pietro, by all the saints I swear to lie down on these rails and die."

Anita trembled, but only answered quietly, "And then, Beppo?" With an oath, Beppo replied—

"And then you will have killed me, body and soul! Ah, Anita, have you no pity? Think of all these years of black despairing night, in which you have been my only comfort. I feel your tears on my hands. I cannot let you go."

Darkness was all around them now, but from the entrance of the tunnel, Anita could see the stars. She thought of Padre Antonio, and of his counsel. "Beppo, I dare not marry you; but I shall not be far away, you and Tante Lisa may keep the house——"

"Ten thousand curses on the house," shouted Beppo, "Pietro may have it for all I care, if you will only give him up."

"You forget, Beppo."

"I never forget," he answered fiercely. "Would he were in my grasp, that I might show him the strength of my hatred. Listen, Anita, to me; I will not wait till morning—the evening train is due,

and, as it passes, here I will lie, and then your words will be too late."

A silence fell between them, only broken by the soft lapping of the waves against the cliff. Beppo's grasp never relaxed, and Anita prayed silently; at last she spoke, "Beppo, how strong you are. Do you know how you are hurting me? I won't move until you let me go, so you need not hold so fast. Thank you, Beppo. Oh! if only you would use your great strength to help, instead of hurt, how wonderful your life would be! Beppo, speak to me. What have I ever done to make you treat me so?"

"If I treat you unkindly, it is but as you serve me. You always were as stubborn as a mule, and now you will not give up your own way, even to save my life."

Again Padre Antonio's words rang in Anita's ears. "Always keep your promises, little one, but be very careful what promises you make." Once more she seemed to feel the soft touch of his thin hand upon her hair, as he blessed her, and she thought, "Padre Antonio would say I was right. God help us!"

Again silence, until the sudden sound of a horn came faintly along the line. Beppo rose to his feet. "For the last time I ask you; will you promise to give up Pietro?"

"I cannot," gasped Anita. There was a moment's pause, and then without a word Beppo released her arm, and flung himself across the rails. "Beppo! Beppo! get up, shrieked Anita, "I did not think you were in earnest, and would dare to die. Oh, God, give me strength! Have mercy upon him!"

Bending over Beppo, she seized his shoulders, and exerted all her force to drag him off the line. There was a sound of tearing as the linen blouse parted beneath her grasp, and she fell backwards upon the up line as the train thundered into the tunnel.

* * * *

For some minutes Beppo lay still, then raised himself and listened. The roar of the engine subsided, and silence replaced the noise of the vanishing train. A silence so intense that Beppo shuddered.

"Anita? Nita! Answer me! Nita! do you hear? I only meant to frighten you, I knew the train passed up on the other rails."

Still silence.

Beppo stood upright, and spoke in hoarse, hurried tones. "I won't frighten you any more, Anita. O! take me home again! Where are you?"

But there was no reply, and in a fearful horror of dread, Beppo felt his way across the line, until his foot touched something soft, and *then*——.

For the last time in Beppo's life there was blood upon his hands. How often had Anita turned from the sight in horror at his cruelty? And now——!

The whole world seemed to him a crimson glare, out of which Anita's pleading face paled and vanished. He tried to speak, to call back the vision, but only a cry of awful despair rang through the tunnel, as Beppo fell senseless upon the ground.

L'ENVOI.

Close to the station of San Romè lives a blind man. His old mother sells newspapers in a kiosk at the corner of the Via Nuovo, but she sells them alone, for to her kiosk her son never comes. He sits all day in dumb silence by the window of his small room, as he has sat since the hour when he was roused from months of oblivion by the sound of a passing flock of sheep and goats. Raising his head, he first listened, and then swiftly followed the animals, grasping in one hand his stick, and in the other a shining brass pitcher. That night his mother found him by the station enclosure, and neither persuasions nor threats could induce him ever to return to the yellow house on the hillside.

Pietro Martini lives in it now.

The blind man never speaks, he seems to be always waiting and listening, and so he sits in expectant silence, leaning a little nearer to the casement as each train comes in, and at the first bleat or cry of animal life he rises, and unaided, makes his way, with fodder upon his shoulder, or brazen pitcher in hand, to and fro to the enclosures, where the cry of the "prisoners and captives" still rises up to heaven.

Running after Shadows.

IN THREE PARTS.

BY FERREIRA.

CHAPTER VI. (*continued*).

THE DETECTIVE GETS THE SACK.

SUDDENLY my thoughts, which had wandered in that strange way they will do, in times of great emergency, when for a brief space no direct action is possible, were brought sharply back to the affairs of the moment, for Jensen made a sudden movement in my arms and I saw that his eyes were open; he was regarding me with a puzzled stare, which, but for the solemnity of the scene, would have been extremely ludicrous. But his faculties seemed to return in a moment.

"Quick," he cried in a voice rendered weak from exhaustion, "quick, they can't have got far; it was just out there in the road where they collared me," and he strove to sit up and indicate the direction, but fell back again with a groan.

"You need not worry yourself," I said quietly, "that happened nearly an hour ago. They will have got clear off by this time."

"Ah, well, we'll catch them yet. Just hold me up and rub my back a bit, will you, they've nearly broken it for me; that plank was so confoundedly hard."

"You may thank your lucky stars," said I, "that it was strong as well as hard, for had it given way, you would have been drowned outright, and poisoned all the fish, eh, Richards?" I made the keeper support him while Giles and I gently rubbed his back, increasing the pressure gradually as the stiffness wore off. Richards watched the process with great commiseration, repeating at every groan, "I *should* like to have caught they chaps, to treat a poor gentleman so! I *should* like to have beaten they well."

In a short while Jensen was able to stand, and, though still shaky, declared himself capable of walking home; so with an injunction to Richards to be sure to come and see us in the morning, we took hold of the detective each by an arm and started homewards. The keeper was thus left in possession of the field, and as we turned

away, I heard him mutter, "Lor', how they do be changed, to surely; to surely!" It was evident that the change which the last few years had wrought in Giles and me had taken a greater hold upon his mind than the events of the last hour. To many people, unacquainted with the type of man, this would be a source of wonder, but to me it was quite natural. The Hampshireman at home has a mind as solid as the ground beneath him: he can digest the deepest type of villainy with unrivalled equanimity, provided it affects not his own immediate concerns, but let some slight change occur in something which is engraved upon his mind in a certain shape or form, and then you disturb his entire equilibrium. But this is by the way.

We had some difficulty in getting the detective, in his sorely bruised condition, up the high bank which it was necessary to climb in order to reach the road, but with many groans and the aid of our arms, he managed to surmount the obstacle, and once on the high road he found walking comparatively easy. We had not proceeded far, however, before he pulled up suddenly with an inelegant exclamation.

"There's something been running into my shoulder this long while, gentlemen; I felt it when they first put the sack over me."

"All right," said Giles. "Strike a light, Harry, and we'll have a look."

I did as directed, but we failed to see anything, when just as the match was burning down, I thought I saw the head of a pin in the detective's coat. Hastily striking another match I pointed out my discovery to Giles, but Jensen jumped so when he touched it, that it was evident that whatever the object was, it was buried in something else besides clothes. In another moment, however, it was drawn forth, and proved to be a long, black pin, bent at one end. Giles placed it in the hand of the detective, who no sooner caught sight of it than he let fly another expletive even more forcible than the last.

"This beats all," he cried in tones of the utmost exasperation. "I stuck this pin, or one exactly like it, just within the lintel of the door of that cottage, so that if anyone went in or out when I was not watching, I should be able to tell by its being either bent or torn out, and now they've been and——" but at this point words altogether failed him, and he broke off into disjointed exclamations

and threats of vengeance, while Giles and I sat down at the side of the road and fairly roared. Jensen stared at us with an air of great disgust for a moment, and then as the humour of the situation began to dawn upon him, the corners of his mouth went up, and he laughed till the tears ran down his face. But he stopped suddenly as his shoulder gave a stab of pain.

"It must have gone a confoundedly long way into my flesh," he grumbled, with a return of ill-humour.

"You may think yourself very fortunate that it went in at a slant instead of straight," said Giles as we proceeded on our way, "or you would have been transfixed like Absalom."

"I thought Absalom was hung," returned Jensen. "It's what all villains come to," he added, and he smiled maliciously as he spoke. I really believe that in imagination he saw his aggressors at the wrong end of a rope and himself looking on. And after the treatment to which he had been subjected in the last few hours, even these sanguinary ruminations were almost excusable.

CHAPTER VII.

BEYOND ENDURANCE.

IT was on a Friday evening, if I remember right, about three days after the adventure which had so nearly resulted in the death of the unfortunate detective, when I found myself strolling quietly along the road about a mile from Ley. I had been spending the day with some old friends of mine over at Abbots Legh, a neighbouring village, and for a time the events of the last few days had been completely obliterated from my mind. This I have often thought of since and wondered at—it seemed a curious prelude to the storm which was even now breaking over our heads.

As I approached Ley and saw the lights twinkling between the trees, I drew out my watch, and quickened my pace on perceiving that it was nearing nine o'clock, for they would be beginning to wonder at the Rectory what had become of me. Even now my mind was still running pleasantly over the events of the last few hours, when I was startled by the sound of a woman's sobs, seemingly close at hand. I hurried on a few paces and then stopped, surprised, and, for the moment, startled at the sight which met my

eyes. I was standing in the deep shadow of the hedgerow, but a few yards ahead of me the bright moonlight streamed across the road through a break in the trees, and fell directly on a gate leading into the fields. Leaning against the gate, and clutching the top rail with her hands was a young girl of about twenty years of age. Her long, dark hair was flowing loosely about her shoulders, and her face which, but for its present expression, would have been remarkably handsome, was turned upward to the sky with such a look upon it I have seldom seen in a human countenance. Broken sentences were issuing from her lips, and the words she uttered left no doubt in my mind as to her unhappy condition.

"Oh, God, close their mouths," she was saying in accents of the keenest despair. "Oh, the baby! the lovely baby! Oh, God, close their mouths, close their mouths."

I have an innate horror of madness in any form which my utmost efforts are at times unable to subdue; but as I listened to this poor creature, something, either in her beauty and utter abandonment, or the peculiar circumstances of the scene, perhaps both, operated upon me powerfully and I felt a great wave of pity surge up in my heart. It was evident that some dreadful scene was passing across her disordered mind, and in order, if possible, to break the spell I approached her, and laid my hand gently on her arm.

"Can I do anything for you, my poor girl?" I asked kindly.

She gazed in my face for a moment with a startled air, and then with a low cry of fear she turned and ran off down the road. It was useless to follow her, so, after watching her retreating figure for a few moments, I continued on my way considerably depressed in spirits by this strange encounter. The incident, though trivial in itself, dispelled at once the pleasant train of thought in which I had been indulging, and brought my mind back sharply to the labyrinth of doubt and mystery, in which, in common with my friends, I had lately become involved. Even now I did not connect the girl's appearance with the incidents of the last few days, indeed it was not until after all hope of their being of service to us had passed, that the full significance of her words first dawned upon me, but the affair coupled with the strangeness of the circumstances, filled me with a vague and undefined dread, and I hurried on with a nearer approach to "creepiness" on my mind than I had experienced for some years.

This uncomfortable state of nervous tension, though common in children and weakly people, has a peculiarly aggravating influence upon a strong and robust man who is constitutionally fearless. It was not therefore in the best of humours that I entered the Rectory about nine o'clock that evening.

The lamp in the hall was burning dimly, and the bang with which I hung my hat upon its accustomed peg echoed strangely through the house. With an exclamation of impatience at my childish want of nerve, I strode across the hall and flung open the drawing-room door. For the moment I got no further, for the scene before me completely paralyzed what little nerve I still possessed.

There was no light in the room except one candle which flared dimly on the mantelshelf, and guttered slightly as the draught from the doorway caught it; but seated in a low chair before the cold ashes of a long dead fire was Giles. His hands were clasped around his knees, and he was gazing straight before him with an expression which numbed me with a cold sense of fear and horror. Only once before had I seen him look so, and that was on the night the girl he loved forsook him for another.

He must have been conscious of my entrance though, for without looking at me he pointed to the open door which I still held in my hand. I closed it and the action recalled me partly to myself.

"What is it?" I gasped rather than spoke.

Then for the first time he looked at me and strove to speak, but for a moment, though his lips moved, so great was his emotion that the words refused to issue from between them. With a great effort he mastered himself and spoke, not collectively indeed, but, alas, too intelligibly.

"The baby—oh, Hal—those devils have stolen him, and - and Marjory—it has killed her," and with a hoarse sob wrung from him by the agony of the moment he covered his face with his hands, and I! I felt as though an earthquake had suddenly cut away the solid ground from beneath my feet.

One look at Giles told me how bitterly he was feeling the futility of his favoured powers of detection, since this was the end of it.

As though he defined my thoughts Giles looked up suddenly, and his voice grated slightly as he spoke.

"No, Harry, this is not the end. But sit down while I tell you all the circumstances—in a few minutes we must act."

I sat down as directed, while, in a voice that gathered strength and energy as he continued, Giles narrated the sad events of that fatal day. Briefly told they amounted to this: The nurse, that afternoon, had gone out to take tea with a friend and carried the baby with her. Returning home about six o'clock with the child in her arms, she was suddenly set upon by three men while crossing the churchyard, the baby torn from her grasp and herself knocked senseless by a blow on the head. When she came to, which must have been some considerable time afterwards, not less than half an hour at the least, she did the very worst thing possible. Rushing into the drawing-room as soon as she reached the Rectory, with the blood streaming down her face, she startled them all by shrieking out that the baby was lost, and in the hands of the men who had tried to murder the policeman. "The shock caused Marjory to faint," Giles continued, "and she has not yet recovered consciousness. We sent at once to A—— for the doctor, and he has been with her ever since, but failed to bring her back to life. We have sent to Oldtown for further medical aid and for the police. Meanwhile we are at a standstill. I was on the point of starting out to look for you when you came in," he concluded.

Sick at heart, and almost stupefied by the magnitude of the shock, I stood in that dimly-lighted room staring at Giles until a sudden knock on the front door brought me to myself.

"Dr. W.—," cried Giles, springing to his feet. "Richards has lost no time in fetching him."

"Richards?" said I, interrogatively, as he hastened to the door.

"Yes. He was here when it happened, and started for Oldtown at once." In another moment he had opened the door and admitted our old friend Dr. W——.

The Doctor grasped our hands in silence before removing his heavy ulster, from the pockets of which he quickly took the different appliances with which he had come provided, transferring them to the breast pockets of his coat with an easy unconsciousness of the effect which this little business always produces upon the anxious hearts of those for whom, at such moments as the present, every action of the trusted physician possesses a certain significance.

At the foot of the stairs he paused, and spoke for the first time.

"I know the circumstances: how long has she been unconscious?"

"About two hours and a half," Giles responded, with a certain

anxious inflection in his voice, and he glanced as he spoke at the Doctor's grave features, as if to gain some confirmation of the hopes which he scarcely dared to entertain.

But the Doctor's face was inscrutable, and he merely said, "Ah!" in a tone which conveyed nothing. At the head of the stairs Ned met us, and the sight of his face completed the bitterness of that hour.

Poor Ned. His was a faith indeed! A faith of sublime self forgetfulness; a faith that had often removed mountains of doubts and responsibilities from the shoulders of others, frequently to lay the latter burden upon his own broad back. But he took his burdens cheerfully and gloried in the sense. His features were as calm and pale as chiselled marble; but round the mouth were certain hard lines, deep as in the face of an old man, and in his eyes a look of fierce despair. At the door of his wife's room Ned paused.

"I will wait here W——; you," with a pitiable attempt to smile, "you will not keep me in suspense longer than you can help."

He spoke calmly, but after glancing at him the doctor made a sign to me which I interpreted by slipping my arm through Ned's. Then I felt that he was trembling so that he could scarcely stand. Shall I ever forget those few minutes, for it could have been no more, though a seeming eternity. Giles believed her to be dead I knew, but I could not quite give up all hope, despite my better reason. I had not seen her, and so perhaps I found it easier to entertain the hopes which my heart dictated. I had heard of many cases of suspended animation, and Giles was no doctor, though we both had some little knowledge of surgery. I tried to say all this to Ned, but one glance at his face sufficed to still my tongue. Giles was standing motionless, his back against the wall, and only a slight, nervous movement of the head at times indicated how intensely he was suffering. Presently the door opened, and anxiously as I had been watching for it, I started like a girl and felt the warm blood rush to my head, so that my temples throbbed, but one look at the doctor's face sent it back to my heart with a cold chill.

The Doctor laid his hand upon Ned's shoulder, and his face was full of a great pity and compassion.

"My poor friend," he began.

Ned winced, and shrank as if from a blow.

"That will do," he muttered hoarsely, and turning quickly, he staggered away towards his small study at the end of the landing.

Dr. W—— turned hurriedly to me. "Go after him, my dear sir. You will tell him better than I can. *She is not dead.* That is all I dare say at present! The action of the heart is almost imperceptible, and even that was failing when I arrived. We have applied a stimulant—fortunately I came prepared—and respiration is just faintly perceptible now. If she recovers consciousness within two hours, we may begin to hope; if she relapses again—" he ceased abruptly with a silence more expressive than words, and hurried back to his patient.

I followed Ned like a man in a dream. "She is not dead. She is not dead!" Those words kept ringing in my ears, and in spite of myself my heart gave a great leap of joy, and the strong hope of youth crept back, and strove in spite of reason to dispel the depths of sorrow and apprehension, which I knew, but would not acknowledge, to be better founded.

Ned was sitting, leaning slightly forward, with his elbows on the table, as I entered. He was gazing straight before him. His face white and set as the face of a cameo, not a muscle, not an eyelid quivered. There was a dreadful quiet about the whole pose that awed me, for I had never seen grief like this.

He started as I laid my hand upon his shoulder, and looked up at me, but I would not meet his eye.

"She is not dead," I murmured.

He grasped my hand with a pressure that was almost painful, and I continued slowly, wondering at my own control.

"They are doing their utmost. If she recovers consciousness within two hours they think that we may hope for her."

He bowed his face upon his hands. "God bless you for those words," he murmured. "But leave me now, Hal. I must learn to say 'Thy will be done.'"

He hid his face and turned away that I might not see his anguish, though, God knows, I could not trust myself to look at him, and I turned to leave him alone with his grief, for now even my presence seemed an intrusion. But at the door I paused for half a moment, as a deep sob came through the gloom towards me.

"Ned, Ned," I cried, "let us hope that His will *is* done."

He caught my drift and gave me a look I shall never forget, and then I left the room abruptly, for my strength was gone and I was but as a child.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

AT the head of the stairs I met Jensen, and one glance at his face assured me that he knew all. I believe there must have been tears in my eyes, the tears of a strong man's agony, for he would not look at me, but turned his head away and grasped my hand in silence.

"This is awful, sir," he exclaimed brokenly, for amongst others Marjory had won the heart of this keen, shrewd man of the world.

Then pulling himself together he cried with an energy and decision strangely at variance with his usual cool, calculating demeanour, "We must lose no time, Mr. Brooke, if we would do any good. The police cannot be here for a couple of hours, perhaps longer, and by that time *we must recover the child and restore it to its parents.* Now mark this, and see what comes of quiet watching. Colonel Madison's house was broken into an hour ago, and some valuable plate stolen. This the burglars carried to the haunted cottage, and secreted there under my very nose. They are waiting there for their leader, who is to join them at ten o'clock, and then they will make tracks for good, as the neighbourhood is growing too warm for them, and the chief of the gang, Harding, is already suspected. All this I overheard while hiding in the yew hedge—you might pass the place a dozen times and never see me. They are puzzled about the child, but Harding swore not to injure him, 'only to frighten that cursed parson,' as he said, but they evidently do not trust him. They are waiting in the wood at the back of the premises; with luck we may gain the cottage unobserved. Now come. Where is Mr. Ferney?"

"I am here," said Giles, appearing from his room, muffled in a thick coat and bearing mine over his arm. "Put this on, Harry, you will need it, for it's turning very cold. Your 'Colts' are in the pockets, loaded."

I nodded as he helped me into my coat, and then we followed Jensen downstairs without a word. Outside at the carriage gates we were joined by Richards, whose very existence up to this moment I had entirely forgotten. He carried a massive stick about three inches in diameter, newly cut from the Rector's drive. This addi-

tion to our forces was evidently part of Jensen's work, for the keeper spoke no word, but fell in quietly beside the detective.

We reached the cottage without misadventure, and by using great caution effected an entrance, as we hoped, unobserved. I have already described the domicile in question, together with its position, and our present mode of entering differed in few respects from that of the previous occasion.

But now our work was to begin in earnest, for once inside the cottage we found it intensely dark, and Jensen having halted at the bottom of a narrow flight of stairs, we were at a loss how to proceed, for we looked to him for instructions.

"Take off your boots," he whispered, and under less serious circumstances I could have smiled at the humour of this injunction. We saw its sense at once, however, and complied promptly and in silence.

"Now," he whispered, "follow me upstairs and make no sound."

There were not many steps to mount, perhaps twelve or fourteen in all, but the intense blackness which seemed to close us in as with an impenetrable wall, and the knowledge that the slightest stumble might render all our efforts abortive, sufficed to make our progress extremely slow, and it was some minutes ere we stood in a group upon the upper landing.

I must confess to a feeling of undefined creepiness as we stood there in the dark. The silence was as intense as the surrounding gloom, and a pin-fall would have sounded loud by contrast. I could hear the keeper just beside me breathing deeply, and the faint in-draw of his respirations irritated the rigid tension of my nerves.

"I think there's no one in here just now," Jensen whispered. "They are waiting down among the yew trees at the back. But they must return before long and get hold of all their stuff. Meanwhile I mean to reconnoitre. I have a dark lantern with me. Come."

But even then, for a moment, no one moved. There was something in our situation so altogether strange, so unlike anything we had ever before experienced, and the inky pall of blackness all around appeared so solid, so impenetrable, that the excitement which had carried us thus far, had begun to give place to a feeling of bewilderment, not unmixed with anxiety, the reaction producing a sensation of nervous expectancy which militated against prompt action.

Suddenly, from out of the darkness right in front of us, there broke a sound which seemed to turn our very blood cold, so sudden was it and so unearthly. Two harsh, discordant cries, loud yet ghostly in their inhuman tones.

My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and Richard's stertorous breathing ceased abruptly. Then from out of the inky blackness came a flapping sound, the rattle of a chain, and then two more of those blood-curdling cries. Even in that brief space of time I remember thinking of Scrooge's nightly visitant, the unquiet spirit of poor Marley; but my mind had scarcely framed the comparison when the detective's lantern flashed forth and revealed the author of those ghastly sounds.

We were standing on a small landing, whose low ceiling, begrimed with dirt and hung with cobwebs, bore sombre witness to the absence of human habitants. Immediately in front of us were two doors, about four feet apart, communicating evidently with rooms whose lookout would be at the rear of the cottage. Against the short space of wall which intervened between those two doors stood a small common-looking chest of drawers. Standing upon this article of furniture, which was in an advanced state of dilapidation, was the midnight guardian of the premises, a large raven. A strange sentinel truly, yet not ill-fitting the evil reputation of the place. But that he was no voluntary prisoner to the circumscribed limits of his perch was evident, by his repeated and violent attempts to free himself from a chain which was fastened to a ring round his leg, and attached at the other end to a staple in the wall.

"We must silence that brute," cried Jensen, taking a step forward.

At the same moment Richards put out his hand to grasp the bird, and but for the fortunate intervention of my hand over his mouth all our efforts to surprise our enemies would have been rendered futile. For the raven had fastened on his finger, with a grip which called all the burly keeper's powers of vociferation into full play, and which even the folds of my pocket-handkerchief barely sufficed to stifle.

"If you make a sound we are lost," I breathed in his ear, with, I fear, a no very gentle pressure upon his vituperative organs.

Meanwhile Giles had set himself to coaxing the bird, by means of those blandishments of which the dumb animal lover always seems

to possess an exhaustless stock, to induce the bird to release its hold. In this he was soon successful, greatly to our relief, for I had much difficulty in restraining Richards from an attempt to strangle the bird with his left hand, and any noise at that juncture would have been fatal. I have often been struck with the power which Giles seems to possess over animals, but never more so than at that moment.

"I don't think he will make any more noise," Giles remarked, as the raven's angry fluttering gave place to a quiet, unruffled acceptance of his caresses. "It would look suspicious if anyone were to come up and find him dead."

The detective looked doubtful.

"I don't know," said he. "Perhaps you're right though. Come on anyhow. We've wasted enough time already."

Opening the door to the left, Jensen entered noiselessly, and following him, we advanced across the room until we stood by the open window. Outside all was dark, but we could hear the voices of several men beneath the window talking in low tones. So Jensen was right, he had tracked them down after all, and I acknowledged to myself that he was possessed of brains more than I had given him credit for.

"What had we better do?" Giles whispered.

"Why, sir, I think our best move will be to lie down on the stairs until they come in, and then nab them. You see if we do that they can't get at their stuff without moving us," and he chuckled softly to himself in the dark.

"What do you mean?"

"Come out of here and I'll tell you; they might hear us talking. Quietly now; no stumbling—damn that bird!" for as he closed the door once more the raven gave vent to a sonorous croak. "Now," he continued, "we had better wait on the stairs, it is darker there than anywhere, and as soon as they enter the cottage we can drop over into the passage, and cut off their retreat. Stay though. As I was in that room I heard an engine working at no great distance. Surely there are no trains running at this time of night?"

"I fancied I heard a puffing sound not unlike an engine," I replied, "but I confess it puzzles me to account for it."

"I heard he," said Richards gruffly, "'tis a ballasting train."

"What?" cried Jensen sharply.

"Why," returned Richards, "sometimes they sends trains along of a night with loads o' chalk and ballast stuff, to chuck out on the 'bankments to strengthen them up like. I suppose they sends 'em along o' night time, because they might get runned into in the day." This was evidently an afterthought.

"Ah!" said Jensen, "and the line is not more than a couple of hundred yards to the back of the cottage. Of course, once in Winchester the burglars would find trains at almost any time in the night to convey them and their booty to London."

"By Jove! you're right," exclaimed Giles. "I should never have thought of that."

"But is it possible," I asked, "that these men could have accomplices on the line, and in the service of the company?"

"More than possible," returned the detective grimly. "Men of this type might have accomplices in any capacity. But what we have to do now is to catch them." So saying he led the way and we were soon all seated silently on the stairs, in such a position that when the burglars should enter the cottage, their heads, as they stood in the passage, would be almost on a level with our hands.

And now commenced, I think, the most painful time in all that trying night; for we had time to think. While events were in operation, our minds and bodies being both actively engaged, we had no opportunity to indulge the awful fear that, now in the stillness came creeping back, to knock with relentless hand at the icy portals of our hearts, and numb with its nameless horror the faculties most needed for our enterprise.

Was the baby dead? Could man be found inhuman brute enough to— Ugh! my mind faltered and revolted at the bare suggestion, prompted by the very terror that possessed me.

Presently the detective crept away. He was gone some minutes, and when he returned there was a heaviness and want of caution about his movements which accorded ill with his previous conduct.

"Anything wrong?" I queried, as he sat rather heavily down on the stair above me.

"Gone," he answered shortly. "But wait, they'll be back again soon. They *must* come in here to get their plunder. We're sitting on it." In spite of the dogged conviction in his tone, I, for the first time, began to fear that after all the thieves had escaped us, though

that, in itself, would be of small moment, if only we could recover the child.

How long we had sat there in the darkness I cannot say, when suddenly there rose a sound that seemed to paralyze our very souls, so awful was it and so ghastly. A long, low howl, commencing softly, yet with frightful intenseness, it rose slowly with an ever increasing volume, until the very air around us vibrated to the ghostly cadence. Then falling gradually it died away into a long, pulsating, wailing note, fading away once more into darkness and silence—a darkness that could be seen, a silence that could be felt.

The hair on my head rose slowly as though an icy blast were passing through it; the sweat burst from my forehead in great drops; I was conscious of a strange clutching at my throat.

At that moment to my relief, Jensen turned the slide of his lantern and a flood of light streamed out. Glancing at him I saw that his under lip was trembling slightly, but the hard lines about his eyes had not relaxed. Giles' head was in shadow, and I could not judge of his expression, but Richards' face was ghastly, and he was trembling from head to foot.

Creeping to the foot of the stairs, Jensen laid his hand upon the door of the room which Giles and I had burst into on the night of our first arrival in Leigh. Even as he grasped the handle the sound rose again, louder and more clear. As it died away Jensen turned the handle, and another moment saw us all within the room.

In the middle of the floor lay a pile of loose bricks, and in the place where they had been removed we saw a large, square trap-door with an iron ring in the centre. But, ah! God! what was that lying beside the trap-door? With a cry I staggered forward, and grasped in my hands a little bundle of infants' clothes. As I did so, Jensen, bending forward, raised the trap-door in the floor.

Immediately from the black hole beneath came the loud and savage baying of fierce hounds.

The detective flashed the bright light of the lantern downwards, and to my dying day the scene that met our gaze below will remain fixed indelibly upon my brain.

A short flight of wooden steps led down to a room about the size of the one in which we stood. Chained to the foot of the steps were two enormous dogs, one a mastiff, the other a pure-bred bloodhound,

their ferocity being amply attested to by the way in which they bayed at us, and strained at the stout chains which held them.

But, horror of horrors!!! There on the floor between them lay the naked form of a baby. *A second glance sufficed to assure us that it was Marjory's child.* There are situations in life which the bald medium of speech is wholly inadequate to portray; and I cannot attempt to describe the crowning horror of this moment. I have even been advised by certain friends to omit this incident altogether, but that course has appeared to me impossible, since so much of the interest of the story hinges upon the fate of this child. Also, when I have a tale to tell I like to tell the whole of it and not a part. Therefore let it stand.

It was not until this moment that I remembered my curious encounter with the seeming mad woman in the earlier part of the evening. Subsequent events had, for the time, entirely obliterated it from my mind. But now in a flash I recalled the agonized face of that girl, and I seemed to hear again those words which, though little heeded at the time, bore now a fatal significance. "Oh, the baby, the lovely baby! oh, God shut their mouths, shut their mouths."

Fool that I was not to have seen and traced the connection at once. And yet, had I done so, of what avail? As the light from the lantern shone down, the child uttered a wailing cry, and one of the dogs with a faint whimpering sound, turned and licked his face with its great red tongue.

The detective drew a revolver from his pocket and aimed at the head of the dog, which was barking fiercely and straining at its chain. Giles laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Must it be?" he said, almost entreatingly.

"There is no alternative," returned Jensen, quickly and sternly. "They will never allow us to go down, and if they grow more excited their savage blood will half madden them, and they might—" he stopped with a shudder that was more expressive than words, and looking down at the bristling brutes with their glaring, blood-shot eyes, we were fain to acknowledge the force of his reasoning.

Giles and I turned away as he again levelled the pistol. There were two sharp reports, each followed by a short gurgling cry, and then silence once more reigned supreme within the cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

PAID IN FULL.

I THINK that for some few minutes I was too stunned, now that the danger was past, to do anything. I remember seeing Giles go down and catch the child up tenderly in his arms, then remounting the steps he wrapped him carefully in his coat, and handed him to Richards, who disappeared from the cottage.

We waited then in silence for about ten minutes, when the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps warned us of our courier's return. Jensen's warning hiss checked the outburst of suppressed excitement which was visible in every line and gesture as he entered.

"The missis she's allright again," he exclaimed, "and she's a-hugging and a-crying over the baby fit to break her heart, and t'e passon he's a helping her," and here the honest fellow had to stop, to gulp down his emotion.

Giles and I grasped each other by the hand, and two earnest prayers of thanksgiving ascended to heaven. Yet even as we stood there in that solemn moment, the detective, ever on the alert, had caught some sound without, for he closed the slide of his lantern, leaving us in darkness.

"They are returning at the back," he whispered. "Come quickly. *Your* work is now completed, *mine* is but begun." In another moment we had ensconced ourselves once more upon the stairs, and only just in time, for as we did so the door at the back of the cottage opened noisily, and we could hear several men enter the passage. They stopped immediately beneath where we lay crouched upon the stairs, and there was a momentary silence, broken, however, by Harding's brutal tones.

"Strike a light, Tom, it's too — dark for anything." There was a sound as of someone fumbling in their pockets, then a scrape, a momentary flare, and the match expired as soon as ignited.

But that half second's flash had shown me there were three men in the passage, Harding being nearest the door.

The first failure, however, gave us but a momentary respite, for a second match being struck it flared up brightly. Even then we might have remained some moments unperceived, but one of the men, a great, tall ruffian, had his head on a level with the top of the

banisters where Richards was crouching, a few steps lower down than ourselves. The temptation proved too great for him. With a loud shout he raised his heavy stick, and brought it down with a crash upon the unsuspecting head. The man dropped like a stone.

In a moment Jensen, Giles and I had leaped over the banisters into the passage, but too late! Both men had already gained the door, and were speeding through the plantation of thickly-growing yews. We followed, not a dozen yards behind, and soon reached the open fields. Then the bright moonshine revealed the fact that there was but one figure ahead of us, so one of them must have given us the slip among the yew trees. But something in the appearance of the flying man convinced us that it was Harding, and we pressed on.

He was making straight for the railway embankment, where an engine was standing blowing off steam, and we strained every muscle to overtake him ere he reached the line. But it was not to be!

Giles was slightly ahead of us, being quicker on his feet, and as Harding reached the steep chalk bank, his pursuer was not five yards behind him. On the line directly in front of us was an engine, with a few trucks attached, from which a gang of navvies had been shovelling ballast on to the embankment, the sides of which they were now smoothing.

"Make for the engine," panted the detective as we rushed up the steep, crumbling bank.

Both driver and stoker were leaning over anxiously watching something a short distance along the line, and as we reached the top we saw that Giles had grabbed his quarry ere he could mount the train, and that now they were struggling together at the top of the bank.

Suddenly they came to the ground with a crash, but in an instant Harding was up again and had sprung on to the rearmost of the trucks. Quick as thought the engine-driver turned and put out his hand to turn on steam, and as he did so Jensen and I made a simultaneous spring and landed beside him on the engine. Too late though, for even as we gripped our men, the great wheels revolved, and the engine started forward.

I grappled instantly with the driver, leaving Jensen to tackle the stoker, a younger and slighter man. My antagonist was a large, heavily-built man, and as I gripped him he attempted to throw me

backwards off the engine. Being foiled in this he freed one hand, and snatched at a heavy iron bar, the handle of which projected from the tender. It was just beyond his reach though, and seeing this he clenched his hand and struck at me savagely. But it was useless. The fingers of my right hand had closed upon his throat, and holding him well away so that he could not strike me—which owing to the great length of my arms I was well able to do—I slowly choked him as he stood. He struggled fiercely, but to no purpose, and in two minutes he sank senseless to the floor.

Then I looked round to see how the detective had fared. He and his antagonist were on the floor, the stoker uppermost, and when I caught sight of them he was making violent efforts to strike Jensen over the head, with a hammer used for breaking the coal, while the latter was endeavouring to frustrate his malevolent intentions by holding on to his wrists with all the strength he possessed. My intervention, however, brought this somewhat strained situation to a speedy end, and in less time than it takes to tell, our two adversaries were bound and handcuffed.

The question now was what to do. Harding we knew was on the train, and if we stopped it he would jump off and escape. On the other hand, where was Giles? Had he succeeded in following Harding on to the truck, or no? Turning, we glanced back through the glass eyeholes at the back of the engine, and then stood paralysed at the sight which presented itself to our astonished vision.

Coupled to the tender of the engine was a tall, flat-roofed luggage van, which, either through laziness or oversight on the part of the officials, had not been detached from the engine ere it was despatched upon night duty with its load of trucks.

Harding, apparently, had crawled over the trucks until he had reached the roof of this van, and then, finding himself still pursued by his relentless enemy, he had turned at bay. As Jensen and I caught sight of them, they were standing up with their arms locked together. Giles had been obliged to rid himself of his coat in climbing over the trucks, and was consequently without firearms.

They swayed as they stood to the motion of the train, and how they managed to keep their balance I cannot think, but I suppose that in a manner they supported each other. I drew a pistol from my pocket, and through the glass eye-hole I covered the swinging

form of Harding, but I dared not pull the trigger. The fall of one meant death to both! Jensen read my hesitation, and turned swiftly with the intention of shutting off steam.

At that instant some inexplicable inspiration made me turn my head, and cast a glance ahead of the flying engine. To my dying hour I shall never lose the memory of that awful moment.

Dashing out the glass behind us with my pistol, I shrieked in a voice rendered shrill and piercing by the agony of my fear: "Down, Giles, down." Just in time he heard me. Suddenly losing his hold upon Harding he crouched low upon the roof of the van, and then strove with one hand to hasten the fall of the staggering robber. But too late!

There was a rattle and a momentary reverberation as we passed beneath the low brickwork of an archway, and Harding was gone!

Yes! swifter than the fall of the guillotine, more deadly than the descent of the headsman's axe had been the onset of the solid masonry, and Harding, the villain, had gone to his last account.

A Warning.

Deep, deep beneath the sea, a billow cried:
 "How merrily my sister-wavelets play,
 So far above me in the azure bay,
 Could I, like them, dance on the foaming tide."

* * * *

The wish vouchsaf'd, for which yon billow sighed,
 It swiftly glided unto light of day,
 But scarce, alas! was kissed by sunshine's ray,
 Than, cast upon the tide-worn strand, it died!—
 To appraise his fate, I would each one were feign
 Content within Home's narrow circle, nor
 E'er seek to venture forth on Life's wild main,
 But, in obscurity, for evermore
 Dwell, without wish day's fleeting beam to gain—
 Like wind-tossed spray, to perish on the shore!

(From the German of Kerwegh),
 By BARONESS SWIFT.

A Dream of Nations.

By MARIAN ELLISTON.

I DREAMED,—and in my dream I was standing, hidden in the shadow of a projecting rock, looking over a far-reaching moorland. As I stood there a party of men passed me, deep in eager talk. I could see their proud bearing, as they stood out clear in the brilliant moonlight, and the well-poised head of the one whose words I caught as they passed: “Her proudest boast is her humanity.” And from their bearing I knew they must be some nation’s noble sons.

Quickly following them came another in military garb. As he ran he waved high his unsheathed sword, that in its undulled lustre reflected starlight and moonbeam. And as he waved it he shouted, “Excalibur, Excalibur!”

Then came by a band of young knights, and I heard one of them exclaim, “The oppressed never cried to her in vain.” And another responded eagerly, “The glory of her knighthood is to preserve Her Name as the terror of the oppressor, and the friend of the persecuted.”

Close behind, but with slower tread, came two, in robe of priest and bishop, praying as they came, “That she may ever help and comfort all that are in danger, necessity and tribulation.” Then they paused for the congregation that followed them to come up—a vast concourse they were, as of the people of a mighty nation. There, kneeling on the moorland I heard the bishop pray again: “That this people whom Thou hast blessed may defend all women and young children.” And the people responded: “We beseech thee to hear us, O, Lord.” Then he prayed again: “That this Thy nation, that is called by Thy name, may show pity upon all prisoners and captives.” And the people responded again; “Both now and ever, vouchsafe to hear us, O, God.”

And I pondered, and wondered!

II.

DARK clouds rose out of the sea, and darkened over all the sky. The starlight was blotted out, and the moonbeams smothered in their struggle to shine through the murky masses. The wind souged and moaned, and the sea sobbed sullenly. Presently the thunders rolled across behind the clouds, and the lightning flashed out luridly; the trees groaned and creaked, and the rain fell.

Between the peals of thunders I thought I heard the grinning howls of devils, and the demonish laughter of devil-possessed men. Sometimes the clash of swords rang above the storm. Sometimes the moans of dying men added weird terrors to the night. Now I could plainly hear the shrieks of women in agonised torture, calling for the rescuing help of all true men. Again, the wails of little children broke upon my ear—of little children too soon sent back to Heaven—till every breath of the night air seemed alive with the Spirits of both Heaven and Hell.

In the lurid flashes of the lightning I could see far across the moorland, terrible scenes of butchery and desolation—the scenes, whence arose together the howl of devil and brute, and the prayer and moan of the helpless and dying.

Then a voice from Heaven flashed out above the thunder, saying, "Who will rise for Me against the evil doer? Who will stand up for Me against the workers of iniquity?"

And I watched, and waited.

III.

AND with one impulse God-ward and man-ward the congregation praying on the moorland rushed forward. No man among them but girded on his sword—no woman held back her dearest.

But the party of counsellors I had first seen gazed amazed and reproachful at their haste. "Why this action so rash and unseemly? Why this indiscretion so ill-advised and injudicious?"

"The Voice of the Lord and the cry of human suffering call us to rescue," they reply.

"Nonsense," broke in the Lord-leveller of High Aspirations,

"this is merely emotional sensationalism. Let me beseech you, dear people, not to be led away by excitement and fanaticism. Rely on us and our wisdom, and on no account suffer yourselves to be influenced in this way by the rhetoric of the Clergy or the enthusiasm of the Press."

"Then do our boasts of humanity and religion mean nothing?" demanded the people,

"Precisely," answered the Chief Foster-father of Statistics. "At least they mean nothing but respectability of reputation. The last thing we dreamed of was that they should be supposed to mean action. Religion and humanity are not to be taken seriously as integral parts of the life of a nation, of course. Surely no one ever conceived anything so purely Utopian! They are merely ornamental theories to plume ourselves on when convenient, and to be promptly forgotten when they interfere with the course of Formality and Red-tapeism."

And while they were busy dissuading the mystified public from interference with brutality, I saw a troop of white gowned and youthful warriors rush past them to the rescue. And the powerful nation arguing with its Counsellors, set up a ringing cheer. Loud and louder their hurrahs echoed and resounded.

"Cease this indecent shouting," roared the angered Counsellors. "Are we, a civilised and highly respectable Power, to give our support to a band of impertinent boys who put us to world-wide rebuke for neglect of duty, by filling up our omissions themselves—and without our consent? Snub them sharply at once, and effectually!"

But the congregation was roused beyond silencing, and they retorted hotly, "What? Support oppression and oppose rescue? The Church, and the Schools, and the Press, and the Poets you have given us for theoretical ornaments have become to us *facts*, not occasional conveniences, and we *live* for liberty and humanity.

And again and again their cheers echoed and re-echoed to the cheering of the little rescue band gallantly defying oppression; till the rebukes of the temporisers were silenced in the anthem of song that cheered the warriors on.

Dantocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

"Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
Who mass'd round that slight brow, these clouds of doom
Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,
Match that funereal aspect with her pall
I think, thou wilt have fathomed life too far,
Have known too much—or else forgotten all."

M. ARNOLD.

CHAPTER I.

TIME stands still for no man, and the leaves of a book are more easily turned than the pages of nature: in this chapter let us leave La Navette and the stormy French coast far behind us, let us banish winter, and call up spring in its place: spring in the south of England, and at Godwin's Rest.

It would have been hard to find, anywhere, a lovelier old house than this one. Seen in the bright sunshine of a May afternoon, the place looked like an ideal representation of the middle ages; floated down the stream of time, to an anchorage on the shores of the nineteenth century.

Though approached from the western side by an avenue of beech trees, the whole front of the building faced south. Below the windows ran two terraces of carefully kept turf; and beneath these again, down a flight of marble steps, stretched another level of green sward, unbroken in its smooth expanse, save where an ancient sun-dial stood up in the centre of the grass. Beyond the green terraces, bordered only by a sunk fence, lay a water meadow, through whose reeds and rushes flowed a narrow but rapid river. Behind the meadow rose the fine timber of a large park; once a part of the Godwin estate, but now owned by Lady Evelyn Thorne, whose husband had bought the property, and had subsequently died.

Most people maintained that Godwin's Rest was a lovelier place

than Godwin's Chase. The house was an older one; originally the family residence, and only turned into a Dower House by John Godwin's grandfather, who had built the Chase, on a plan of his own, in the year eighteen hundred.

Certainly the outlook at the Chase was less picturesque than the outlook at Godwin's Rest. The house, standing on a plateau of rising ground, could hardly have been better placed. All against the windows grew climbing roses, and passion flowers, just now coming into leaf; and about the garden, at certain intervals, were clipped box and yew and bay hedges: the last remaining remnants of an ancient stiffness, handed down from the days of "ruffs and cuffs and farthingales."

Out of the wreck of his possessions, John Godwin had done well to keep the Dower House, and the Manor Farm belonging to it. Some people wondered that he should care to settle here, and live so very quietly, in a neighbourhood where his father had formerly been a great landowner, and a member of parliament: but John seldom troubled himself about the opinions of the rest of the world. After a wandering, adventurous life he had returned to Godwin's Rest; and it seemed as if he meant to remain there, at any rate for the summer months of each year.

On the May afternoon of which I am writing, he was seated in his study, a long oak panelled room facing the green lawns; while on a low cushion, lying on the floor by the window, a boy was half reclining, arranging a handful of spring flowers in a china bowl. A slender boy with closely cropped hair, save only where one bright wave still fell squarely cut, French fashion, across a white brow. May, and early roses, giant kingcups and a piece of stolen apple blossom lay spread out on the wide window seat; and as the childish fingers picked up one flower after another, John Godwin's eyes followed the movements of the busy hands, as tenderly as the eyes of the Countess would have followed them, only a few months previously.

The master of Godwin's Rest was a handsome, soldierly-looking man, with a sunburnt complexion. One empty sleeve showed a token of his Italian campaign; yet, glancing at him now, a casual observer might have found it hard to believe that he had only returned to England nine months previously to die: so, at least said his sister-in-law. At first Godwin could not venture to contradict

this statement. Gradually in his secret heart he began to disbelieve in it altogether. By the time he had been at home four months, he was creeping about with the aid of a crutch; and after a while he discarded artificial support. The wound in his leg healed very satisfactorily, and he began trying to fly fish with one hand, attended by a water keeper. And when Mrs. Godwin talked of "artificial strength," and preached resignation, John inwardly bade resignation be hanged, and went on fishing. Many men, severely wounded as he had been, would have died; but Godwin, on his first return had been fortunate in the skilled treatment of a clever surgeon; next to this he possessed a splendid constitution, and, much to his doctor's "and his own satisfaction" he struggled back to life and health.

The vexed question of his recovery once settled, his thoughts turned first to the child he had left in France as a baby—the little son whom he had not seen for ten years. In answer to his letters, Madame de Follet wrote that the proposed journey must be delayed, as the boy was at death's door with a nervous fever. Upon receipt of this news Godwin started at once for La Navette. He was absent for some weeks, and on his return to England he brought Paul back with him. For the last month the boy had been established at Godwin's Rest. His two little girl cousins regarded him curiously. His aunt welcomed him with sufficient kindness, but with no great warmth of manner. If she had ever been capable of a great passion, she had spent it all on her dead husband, by her own account. She was a handsome woman, brown haired and brown eyed, in the Madonna style of beauty: but there was something monotonous in her dreamy, graceful movements, and her manner seemed to say that she lived in a land where it was "always afternoon." Her voice, low pitched and *trainante*, might easily have made a listener imagine her to be afraid of waking somebody up. Her father and only brother had fallen in the war; and she had only one living relation left—a distant cousin, M. de Brie by name, who, for the last ten years had rented her childhood's home, and sole property; the Palazzo Piarell, a small but lovely estate in Sicily. For various reasons of a substantial kind, Mrs. Godwin preferred to live in England; but in her secret heart, she styled her comfortable home a banishment.

Paul soon noticed that the pathetic stories which his aunt drew of

the war were all in reference to her own sufferings. Without defining the reason, he infinitely preferred the tales told by his father. Garibaldi, Mazzini, Ruffini, and other Italian patriots soon became to him not merely names, but living personalities. Godwin's whole heart had been in the war, and he was never tired of talking over past events, nor Paul of listening. From the very first the boy had turned instinctively to his father. Thin, pale, and quiet he was utterly changed from the bright-faced climber, who had scaled the cliffs at La Navette. He looked like a shadow of his former self. Of the illness that had all but robbed him of life, and from which he was even now recovering, he never spoke. Before the shock he had received on that February night his reason had well-nigh tottered; and if the Countess had called his illness brain fever, instead of nervous fever, she would have been nearer the mark. While still in a semi-conscious state he had been moved from La Navette to Les Graces, in order to be nearer to medical advice; and with his first returning sense of life, he had been aware of his father's presence, side by side with his grandmother's anxious face. His mind shrank at first from all thought of his illness as if branded with a horror of great darkness. But gradually the mental fog which had mercifully blotted those terrible weeks of pain and fever, rolled away. Past events, no longer blurred and confused, like the fragmentary reflections in a shattered mirror came clearly back to him. He had a perfect recollection of the cause of his illness and of the explanation of its attendant circumstances, made to him subsequently by his grandmother, during his convalescence: an explanation which seemed to have sealed his lips. Locked away in his young heart lay the shadow of a family skeleton, a skeleton which his father had hoped to keep from him for ever, but which chance or fate had revealed all too soon. There were times when he dreaded to be alone. He never spoke of this fear, and if left by himself made no complaint; but when twilight came on, he would follow his father about the house like a small shadow, as if the strong man's presence furnished a talisman against the growing of the darkness.

From the very first Godwin discouraged all mention of the boy's old home; and the reticence seemed a mutual one. To his father Paul never spoke of the past. Perhaps Godwin mistook the nature with which he had to deal. Childhood has its own reserve, of an

all but impenetrable kind ; but it is not always well to leave such reserve unbroken. The most curious thing about Paul at this time, was the habit of silence in which he seemed enwrapped. He seldom uttered a word ; no one had heard him laugh since his arrival : and if asked a question, more often than not his only answer was a bend of the head. It was not apathy, or any lack of intelligence which made him so quiet. Sickness often opens strange doors, and Paul had been in shadow-land during all the earlier spring time, on the very borders of death : and had come back enfolded in an atmosphere which scarcely belonged to this world. The gaze of the dark eyes bore a far away look ; a look that pierced space, as if detached from its bodily surroundings. More than anything else this still gravity distressed John Godwin.

" Child," he would say, " what are you thinking of ? "

At this question Paul would come back with a start to reality.

" I am thinking things out, father."

" You think too much : try to forget," his father would say persuasively : but to this suggestion Paul never made any answer.

Perhaps some of his happiest hours were spent when he could creep away from everybody to a sunny attic upstairs, which he called his play room. Godwin's Rest possessed a good deal more accommodation than the necessities of the family required. The house, a very old one, originally used as a monastery, had been altered and added to from century to century by various owners. The whole of the front of the building was Elizabethan, with a large hall in the centre filling a considerable space. This hall connected two wings which stretched themselves out to the right, and to the left of the main entrance. Above the left wing were several unused bedrooms where the children loved to play on wet days ; and over this floor again came a good sized attic, half filled like its corresponding attic in the other wing, with lumber.

Paul soon discovered this retreat, and begged leave to call it his own. His father, only too glad to humour a harmless fancy, formally made over the attic to the would-be occupant. The superfluous boxes were cleared away to leave room for the furniture, selected and retained by Paul. An old fashioned carved table remained in one corner of the room, together with a dwarf bookcase placed beside it. A chippendale chair and a low stool were set by the table, and at the far end of the attic stood a pretty old spinet,

once played upon and loved by John Godwin's mother, but now banished by Mrs. Godwin to make room for a grand piano in the downstairs sitting-room. Paul had no taste for music, but the spinet, carved and painted, had taken his fancy. He had brought a box of books with him from La Navette, and up here, where the servants never came, he reigned supreme. The attic boasted two sets of windows: one facing north, the other south. The north window looked upon the back garden, and a young plantation of larch trees. The south window faced the river, the terraced lawns and the sun-dial. Of the two this latter view might well have seemed the more attractive, but Paul preferred the northern outlook, since on a clear day, far, far away, beyond the larches a faint blue line might sometimes be seen, betraying the distant sea.

Alone in his sanctum, the boy would sit curled up hour after hour, like a second Gautama, with his chin on his hand, while Bellissima crouched at his feet. Here, too, he could watch the wild life on the river: the quarrels of the dabchicks, and merry moor-hens; and the tiny island amid-stream where every year the swans had a nest. Above, and again below the belt of green, the river, branching from the main stream, parted in four wide arms, like a drawn out cross, against the head of which came the long water-meadow. At first after the sea, the river view seemed tame to Paul; but gradually he grew to love the clear deep stream, which slipped out of sight behind the trees in the park: the water taking a sudden dive, and falling in a torrent of foam through a great eel-hatch. The murmur of this cascade, itself unseen, came across the meadow, and over the terraces at all seasons of the year, like a voice from the spirit of the woods saying, hush!

But there were other reasons why Paul liked to be here. Had John Godwin known all the reflection that went on behind that passive exterior, he would surely have endeavoured to win the boy to speech. Strong feeling denied all outlet is apt to centre itself with strange persistence upon the past. The look, last seen on his grandmother's face, weighed far more heavily upon Paul than all his father's counsels to forget. Silence does not always mean acquiescence, rather the contrary. And no one realised how much time Paul spent alone in the attic, and not in the play room beneath it.

His solitude was first invaded by his younger cousin, Henrietta.

One afternoon, about a month after his arrival, the boy was sitting in his favourite Buddha-like attitude, when there came a sudden imperative thump low down on the door panels. At the sound of the knock Paul rose, slowly crossed the floor, and opened to the small intruder.

"What do you want, little one?"

"I want you," said Henrietta. "May is with Mamma, and I have been cross, and Sophie says that she does not like naughty children in the nursery, and Mamma said she would not have me downstairs, and so I have come to you to get good."

Paul was not proof against this form of persuasion, yet he admitted his small cousin with a sigh. The poodle, being in a more hospitable frame of mind than its master, rose, wagging its tail, and offering a paw in a very engaging manner.

Paul would not have said so, but he viewed Henrietta's entrance with secret reluctance. He wanted to keep the attic to himself, and this feeling was dictated by no selfish motive, since his cousins had other playrooms besides their nurseries. Had he been questioned he could not have explained his reason for thus shutting himself up. He would have said truly that he liked to be quiet, but this was not all at the bottom of his heart lay that sweetest of all virtues, an unconquerable fidelity. In the midst of this happy family life the thought of his grandmother's loneliness haunted him. Therefore, all alone, he had created for himself a nook, where, by the aid of imagination, he could conjure up some memory of the beloved figure. At times the picture created by his dreams became so real that he could scarcely believe himself to be in England; and this afternoon, with the old fairy tale book in his hand, he had been far away in spirit when the little Henrietta demanded admittance.

Nevertheless, from the first day of his arrival, he had given his allegiance to his small cousin. Perhaps because she was the fairest thing that his eyes had ever rested upon. Accustomed to be petted by everyone, save by her mother, she accepted all homage with a certain baby graciousness that was very attractive, and that had early won for her the nickname of the "Princess." She was a beautiful child with a regular delicately-featured face; lit by a pair of glorious dark eyes, and framed in a flood of deep golden curls. The French *bonne* declared Mademoiselle Henriette to be as wild as a hawk, and said that surely there must be gipsy blood in her

veins ; but the child's skin in its fair transparency contradicted this assertion. To-day there were traces of tears on the long eyelashes which Paul noticed, and the lips quivered a little as she asked : " Do you mind my being here very much ? "

This appeal could meet with but one answer. Henrietta was enthroned in the only seat, and her host proceeded to do the honours in a manner that no longer betrayed any unwillingness, while Bellissima's softly wagging tail beat a flail-like accompaniment on the uncarpeted boards.

Henrietta's glance fell first on the fat volume which lay open on the table, and the picture of the Dryad attracted her instant attention.

" Who is that ? " she asked.

" The Dryad : she was a fairy and lived in a tree, Henrietta."

" I wonder she did not get tired of doing that, Paul."

" She did get very tired of it ; after a time she ran away. I will read you the story if you like," said Paul. He handled the book lovingly, while Henrietta, well-pleased at this suggestion, peeped over his shoulder at the pictures as he read. She could not quite understand the fairy tale, but it satisfied her idea of the marvellous. A certain sense of the forbidden, added zest to her attention ; and the glowing descriptions of colour, and music, harmonised with her nature. For the child was an artist at heart, and the spirit of some old Greek ancestress looked out of her eyes ; spoke in the setting on of her small head ; in the slender taper fingers, and in the very gestures of her hands.

" My grandmother used to read that story to me," said Paul when he had finished.

" You love her, Paul ? "

" Yes, I love her." The boy's whole heart spoke in his answer. He would have added more, but he had a feeling that his father regarded this subject as a forbidden one. Henrietta looked at him curiously.

" Why don't you speak of your grandmother ? "

Paul sighed. How could he speak of her when he noted the shadow which the beloved name brought to his father's face, and his aunt's cold lack of responsiveness.

" I do not speak of her," he said, " because it seems to me that my aunt dislikes everything French, even the language."

"Mamma only dislikes French when she is obliged to talk it," said Henrietta, with unconscious irony. "I like it better than Italian, because you see I am nearly always with Sophie. Uncle John declares sometimes we sound like the tower of Babel. Mamma said I was naughty this afternoon because I mixed things up to tease May. You see," she went on, leaning her chin on one small hand, "you see, it is a great mistake that I am not a boy. I often wish I could turn in to one. Mamma sometimes says that the very sight of me is a disappointment to her. Sophie tells me that when I am grown up it will be different ; but I do not grow very fast, and Sophie can't read stories as you do. I think, now that I have been here once I shall come very often, if I don't plague you too much."

There was something so innocently pathetic in this speech that Paul stooped and kissed the fair little face. If a treaty of affection is necessary to the happiness of some people, at this moment it was ratified between these two.

Henrietta was devoted to her mother, but so far, sadly enough, the devotion seemed anything but mutual ; and across the child's warm, impulsive nature the one great want in her life cast a shadow of timidity. No devotee worshipped the Pope as Henrietta worshipped her mother ; but in a vague, undefined way, she could not help being conscious that she had sinned in the matter of sex ; that in some manner Mrs. Godwin was justly aggrieved and saddened at her presence. For her beautiful, stately mother often sighed when she came into the room, and nearly always said, "Run away now, dear, your voice makes my head ache." No thought of resentment had ever yet entered Henrietta's mind, though Mrs. Godwin seemed destitute of all natural tenderness where her second daughter was concerned. May was the favourite : a fair-haired, blue-eyed chatter-box, who always took great interest in her "toilette," and dressed her dolls in imitation of the Paris fashions. If the passing joys of our childhood are great while they last, the griefs are for the moment proportionately bitter, and this afternoon a squabble, brought on by May's teasing, had doomed Henrietta to forego a long-promised drive, while the other twin had driven off in the carriage unpunished and placidly triumphant. Henrietta thus left to her own devices, betook herself upstairs with an inward conviction that the attic would prove a safe refuge, and her cousin a sure comforter.

Mrs. Godwin had looked forward to Paul's advent with very dubious pleasure ; but since his arrival a great revolution had taken place in her feelings. It really began to seem likely that the new comer would succeed in keeping Henrietta in order ; a task never before satisfactorily accomplished by anyone else. The little princess had a knack of climbing trees, of tumbling into the river, and defying her nurse, an indulgent, good-natured woman over whom she ruled with a rod of iron. It would have taken a judicious person to manage Henrietta at this period of her life, and Sophie was not always judicious ; and May, a tease by nature, and a favourite with the powers downstairs, usually proved victorious in any dispute carried to the drawing-room.

Now as the weeks rolled by, whenever the question arose : "Where is Henrietta?" the invariable answer came back, "Oh, somewhere with Paul, I suppose." Perhaps by the law of contrast the boy's quietude appealed to the little girl's more stormy disposition. Paul, languid yet, found his small cousin as fascinating as a pocket cannon. He never quite knew what she might do next, and he could not help loving her, even when she tried his patience.

As time went by, Henrietta grew to regard the attic in the light of a sanctuary. When in disgrace she would steal away to the top of the house to play on the old spinet ; put Bellissima through his tricks, or, if Paul were there, coax him to read to her. Besides, in his absence she could always look at the pictures in Hans Andersen. She knew the place on the shelf where the book stood, wedged in between Sophocles and Plato ; and her small hands could just pull down the tempting volume. Was not the poodle named after the dog in the "Bronze Boar?" Of course it seemed a pity that the story-book dog should have been a spaniel ; but, as the little princess remarked once, by way of consolation, Bellissima could not be blamed for this piece of misfortune ; and there was no mistake about the name, if there was about the dog. This logic was unanswerable. Strangely enough, of all the stories, Henrietta's favourite always remained the Dryad. The pictured face was the prettiest in the book, and the description satisfied her art-loving nature.

After a time, out of these readings the children developed a great fancy for what their nurse called "play-acting." At the top of the garden, as good luck would have it, there grew a beautiful live oak, and, close beside it, flourished a little pink chestnut, which Henrietta's

baby hands had been guided to plant on her first arrival at Godwin's Rest. Beneath the shade of the "Dryad's Oak," the children held their mimic stage. They were very fond of going through the scenes in "The Old Bachelor's Nightcap." Often and often Henrietta used to say, "Lady Venus, Lady Venus, Tannenhäuser is here," in the hope of conjuring up some shape from the unknown; but alas! nothing either beautiful or terrific in character ever made its appearance in answer to her call. Paul frequently conned over his tasks in the oak tree; and Henrietta often sat there too, perched fearlessly aloft. She could climb as well as her cousin, and if her morning holland wrappers were generally stained a bright green by the end of the week, Sophie's good nature never betrayed the reason for so much extra washing.

May cared nothing for this kind of amusement; but of their poetical fancies and their tree climbing the other two children never wearied. In the fine weather they were a great deal out of doors, followed everywhere by Bellissima. The dog was so gentle and intelligent, and moreover so quick to learn any trick, that he provided a never failing source of amusement for both children.

Henrietta had a great many pets; rabbits, guinea pigs and a pair of beautiful white peacocks, whose fallen plumage decked the heads and dresses of many families of dolls; dolls who found in the little princess a mistress as capricious as a Persian Sultana, and in Paul a willing surgeon of the experimental school, and, more often than not, an undertaker.

As spring deepened into summer, Paul was destined to make a new friendship. One sunny afternoon, as he came round the corner of the house, in company with his cousin, he perceived in front of the hall door a low phaeton, drawn by a pair of black ponies; and on the driving seat he saw next a young man of about one-and-twenty years of age, with blue eyes, fair hair, and a thin but pleasant face.

"Why, there's Ted!" said Henrietta in an astonished voice. "Cousin Evelyn must have come back. I suppose she is calling on Mamma. Come, Paul, show Ted Bellissima. He loves dogs."

At this speech Paul came forward and shook hands, his French ease saving him from awkward shyness. Thus was accomplished the boy's first introduction to Lord Edgar Lisle, commonly called Ted, whose sister, Lady Evelyn Thorne, owing to the death of her husband, was now the owner of Godwin's Chase, and of nearly all

the property which young Godwin might one day have inherited, had it not been for that fate which so often compels children to pay some penalty for the sins of their ancestors. No such thought entered Paul's head; his attention had been caught by a crutch sticking up above the carriage rug, and Ted, noting the direction of his gaze, said simply enough, "I was as active as you are once, youngster, but crutches aren't bad things when one has been on one's back for three years."

He spoke in such a matter of fact tone that Paul gazed at him in wonder.

By this time Henrietta had clambered into the carriage with a delighted look on her face. "Oh! Ted," she said, "I am so glad to see you out of bed again. Are you going to stay at home now, as you did before?"

"I shall be at the Grange for the rest of the summer," he said, "and then Sol and I are off in the yacht, and we mean to carry your Uncle John away with us too, if we can, Princess."

Henrietta leaned her pretty head confidently against his shoulder; it was easy to see that these two were old friends.

"Then I can come to tea with you once a week as I used to," she said. "May I bring Paul too, and Bellissima? They both behave better than I do, Ted; even Sophie says so."

Ted Lisle laughed. "Come, by all means, and the more the merrier, Princess. Does that poodle of yours always live on its hind legs?"

"You haven't shaken hands with him, that's why," said Henrietta. "Paul, do put Bellissima through his drill."

Over the merits of the dog the trio were speedily so deep in conversation, that they failed to notice the presence of another person: a lady, who came out presently on to the door-step, and with a well-pleased air stood watching the little group in front of her. She was tall, slender, and brilliantly fair, with coils of pale gold hair shining under a crape bonnet. Her eyes of a bright hazel were shaded by dark lashes, which showed in pretty contrast to her blonde colouring. After a few minutes she came forward and laid one hand on Paul's shoulder. At the light touch the boy started, turned round, and pulled off his cap, while Henrietta scrambled out of the carriage and put up her face for a kiss.

"Are you Paul Godwin?" said the lady smiling.

"Yes, I am Paul," the boy answered gravely: "and you, Madame?"

The quaint politeness of his manner seemed to charm his questioner. "We are all relations here," she said. "I am Evelyn Thorne and your cousin by courtesy. Your father has just promised me that he will go yachting with my brothers this autumn; they want looking after badly. It is a pity that you can't go too," she went on, turning to Henrietta. "Ted always says that you are his best nurse. You must come to the Grange on Monday, and bring your cousin with you." She stooped to kiss the little girl, smiled again at Paul, and then, getting lightly into the carriage, whipped up the ponies and drove off at a pace which made both children stare after her in astonishment.

"What's the matter with the one you call Ted?" Paul asked.

Henrietta knitted her small brows. "It was a railway accident: a very bad one. Ted had his back hurt and two ribs broken, and the part you breathe with was hurt too. I used to be very unhappy about him. He is so big and tall, taller than Uncle John, that I thought if he died he would never go to heaven, that the angels would never manage to carry him up there; but that was ever so long ago. I know better now. Sophie told me that if people only have light hearts, it doesn't matter how heavy their bodies may be: besides Ted is always so cheerful, that I am sure he will get well some day."

"He doesn't seem to mind being ill," said Paul. "I should care dreadfully."

It was Henrietta's turn to look surprised now. "Care!" she said, "of course he cares, but only cowards make a fuss, and when they do it doesn't alter anything. I have often heard Sophie say that, when she has had to pull my loose teeth out. That's why I don't scream; and, oh, Paul," the little philosopher went on with a sudden change of voice, "the Grange is so lovely! It's a much prettier place than the Chase, you will see when you go there on Monday. When I grow up I mean to live at the Grange, always. Ted says I may, and you shall come too, if you like, and Bellissima." And having thus comfortably settled the affairs of her small universe, Henrietta obeyed the summons of the nursery bell and went indoors to tea, while Paul followed her more slowly.

Henrietta had only spoken the truth when she said that the Grange was a lovely place: as a matter of fact it was one of the loveliest places in England, very like Godwin's Rest if the latter house had been viewed through a double magnifying glass.

Harebrook Grange was only four miles away from Godwin's Rest, and barely two from the Chase. The Harebrooks, the Godwins and the Thornes, were all connected by marriage; and their relationship requires a word of explanation for the better understanding of the reader.

At the Grange lived the old Duchess of Harebrook—the belle of a former generation—a great heiress, and the only sister of John Godwin's father. Her fortune, inherited from her mother, had never been squandered in reckless extravagance, in the fashion affected by her brother. When she married the Duke he was already a widower with five small children, called respectively, Solway, Maurice, Evelyn, Ethelyn, and Edgar. At one-and-twenty the Duke had dutifully taken the wife selected for him by his parents: at five-and-thirty he married again to please himself. For thirteen years Catherine Godwin counted herself a happy woman. Then troubles came swiftly: Maurice fell in the Crimean war, and Ethelyn, a delicate fragile girl, the pet and darling of the household, died at the early age of seventeen. The Duke himself did not long survive his daughter, and from the shock of this last loss the Duchess had never completely recovered. She had no children of her own, and she was not particularly fond of her eldest step-son.

Completely unlike his father in disposition and in habits, the present Duke could only be described as a good-looking indolent man, who disliked society heartily, and who could never be persuaded to take the smallest interest in politics. By his own account he suffered from chronic irritation of one lung; and a warm climate seemed to be so necessary to his well-being, that he only came to England for a few weeks every summer. During the rest of the year, his affections were equally divided, between his yacht and his violin. He was an excellent musician; and the sailors were wont to say that it must be a bad storm if his Grace couldn't fiddle through it.

Ted Lisle being at present an invalid, most of the Duke's social duties had gradually been taken up by a distant cousin—an ener-

getic, wealthy and practical young man ; a regular destroyer of the family pheasants in England, and of the family salmon in Scotland ; an enthusiastic fisherman, and a happy occupier of the family town house during the season.

"Capital fellow, George, takes all that trouble off my hands," the Duke used sometimes to remark.

"Capital fellow, Sol, but mad as a March hare," this more frequently was the unexpressed opinion of George Clifford. The two seldom met, but they were very good friends, and the one filled up the social gaps left by the other.

People called the Duke eccentric. Mothers with pretty daughters smiled upon him in vain, for at two-and-thirty he was a confirmed bachelor. England might expect every man to do his duty ; but it seemed likely that England would be disappointed where the Duke of Harebrook was concerned. He had a very sincere affection for his sister Evelyn ; indeed she was the one woman whose companionship afforded him any real pleasure : and the only person who could sometimes persuade him to abandon his own pursuits for the benefit of other people's interests.

At seventeen Lady Evelyn married General Thorne. The General, a wealthy, elderly man, and the purchaser of the Godwin Estate, enjoyed his newly found happiness for a very brief space of time. Devoted to field sports, but always a careless rider, he broke his neck, out hunting, within six months of his marriage.

Lovely, well dowered and thus early bereaved, it seemed probable that Lady Evelyn would not long remain inconsolable. But ten years had elapsed since her husband's death and she was still a widow.

In days gone by, before the sale of the Chase, John Godwin had been constantly at the Grange. Report asserted that the Duchess wished her favourite nephew to marry an heiress, and had chosen a suitable *parti* for him in the person of one of her step-daughters ; the two girls were twins, and much alike both in name and face, except that Ethelyn, delicate and fragile, leant always upon her more bright and active sister. At one time young Godwin's attentions seemed to the outside world to be equally divided ; but whatever truth lay in the various rumours then flying about, nothing came of them. And nowadays, though time and death had set Evelyn and John free to form new ties, the latter was far too proud to attempt

to engage his cousin's affection, even had he wished to do so. A richer, or a more long-sighted man might not have burthened himself with the care of a sister-in-law's family ; but then, according to the Duchess, John had always been a generous fool, and probably would remain one to the end of his life.

There are plenty of people in the world, and not the worst people either, who are deluded into imagining that their particular piece of pinchbeck is real gold. Possibly the most trying part of their mistake remains, when they leave their pinchbeck behind them as a precious and desirable legacy ! And for the sake of the impulsive, warm-hearted dead and gone, those dearly loved ones whose shadows linger in so many households, we often allow a fictitious value to many worthless things ; while all the time, at the bottom of our hearts, we recognise the pinchbeck. Yet what a fount of irritation lurks in these same legacies ; from the shrieking parrot to the ill-tempered lap-dog ; from the ill-tempered lap-dog to the spoiled servant : the scale is an ascending one, culminating in that worst incubus of all, the relict of a near and dear relative. We know her, most of us, that complacent, correctly mournful person, who descends unresisted on some luckless household, to reign like a blister in the shrine of the departed : forging a dead name at every turn, while trading in pirate fashion with the treasures of memory and affection.

"No one ever appreciated my poor Laura ; you will be kind to her, and to the babies, for my sake, won't you, John ?"

These words lingered in John Godwin's ears, bringing back with them the rolling smoke clouds of Aspromonte, the battle-field strewn with the dead, and a face with a grey shadow upon it : the face of the high-spirited, devil-may-care, yet dearly loved brother, who always spent money like water, and then repented too late ; and who had now flung away his own life, to save that of the elder man whose inheritance he had helped to squander.

And so in the shrine of the dead, Laura Godwin found a safe dwelling place, and her brother-in-law would never thrust her from it. Only at certain intervals he still went yachting, leaving the feminine half of the family in sole possession of Godwin's Rest. If the truth must be told, John found his sister-in-law rather an exhausting companion, and he had no wish to pass by the old back door of escape once more set open by his cousin. Besides, in former

days the yacht had been his own, and once on board the "Clytie," he always felt at home.

CHAPTER II.

"Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give,
Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest, yet proceed'st to live."

M. ARNOLD.

As the summer went by, Paul's health steadily improved, and when the autumn came he was able to receive instruction from a clergyman who lived in the neighbourhood—a certain Mr. Darcy, a dreamy scholarly man, glad to eke out a scanty income by devoting some hours of his time to a day-boarder. This kind of teaching went on uninterruptedly for nearly a year, when Godwin decided to send Paul to school. The first preliminaries being once settled, other matters were soon brought to a satisfactory termination; and the time of departure drew nigh, all too soon for the happiness of one person. The little Princess, inconsolable at the thought of losing her playmate, followed Paul everywhere like a disconsolate shadow; tried unsuccessfully to help with his packing; and could hardly restrain her tears at sight of his locked and labelled box.

The evening before he started for school, Paul wandered into the study in company with his cousin. Godwin, seated there reading, presently began to listen in desultory fashion to the talk going on between the two children at the other end of the room.

"Why do you want to leave home?" Henrietta asked in dismal tones.

"Because I shall get on faster. You know to be an author one must study a lot."

"And when you have got on?" she said, dismissing the authorship without a second thought.

"Then I shall go to Oxford, my father says."

"And after that?"

"Then I shall be grown up, Princess, and so will you be, too."

A flash of April sunshine lit the child's face into a strange loveliness as she said quaintly: "Mamma hopes that I shall be older and wiser

some day, and a comfort to her. Small children always make grown-up people's heads ache. That is why I have to be so much in the nursery now; but, oh! Paul, when I am really grown up, fancy being always with mamma dear, beautiful mamma! I want that, more than anything else. But it takes a long time to grow older, and sometimes the time seems such a long way off, too, doesn't it?" she ended wistfully.

"No," said Paul, "the future seems close to me; much too close." A shiver ran over him, and Godwin, looking up at the moment, was struck by the sharp contrast in the expression of the two young faces. There was an uncomfortable sensation in his own throat, not brought there by the newspaper, but by Henrietta's words.

The mirage of life looks very fair in the distance when we are young, yet to Godwin there was something unusually pathetic in the mental attitude of these two children. The one building on her mother's love, the other?—What was written on Paul's face? Surely not the subtle difference between one who has recognised the mirage for what it is, and one who is still deceived by the glamour of the show. It was a look to cast a shadow on any father's heart, for to the short and fleeting years of happy childhood the world's entrance-gate should be but an outlook of beautiful possibilities, where fear may have no pass-key, and doubt has never stolen an entrance.

Henrietta noticed the shadow on Paul's face, too, without understanding it.

"What do people have to do when they are grown up?" she asked.

"Oh, all sorts of things," said he lightly, as if trying to throw off some thought—which had suddenly presented itself. The clasp of the little girl's hand tightened on his arm.

"What will you do? I don't care about other people," she whispered.

For a moment he stood silently gazing before him, then he said slowly, with apparent effort: "Some day, when I am grown up, I shall go back to France to visit my grandmother; and, if I can, I shall write a great play."

This was too dreadful! It was bad enough that Paul should be going to school: it was insufferable that he should talk of returning

to France. The idea put the culminating touch to the rising tide of Henrietta's grief. Her eyes dilated with a strange terror. She turned and clung to him sobbing.

"Don't go, don't: I couldn't bear it," she said. "It is like the swan fairy tale. If you do go away again over the sea, you will never come back, never!"

Paul stooped down trying vainly to soothe the storm he had raised, but the child paid no attention for once to his words or to his caresses. For a minute or two she stood clinging to him; then suddenly turned away, darted through the open door, and disappeared. He would have followed her had not his father called him back. Godwin had heard the question, but had not caught the answer; and he regarded Henrietta's grief as the natural herald of this first separation.

Paul came almost reluctantly, while his father throwing down the paper, said kindly: "Have you ever thought about what you would like to do when you are grown up?"

He spoke with reference to a choice of profession, but Paul's instant answer startled him not a little.

"When I am grown up, before I do anything else, I am going back to La Navette to visit my grandmother."

It was the first time for more than a year that any reference had been made to the past. A feeling of disappointment shot through Godwin's heart. "I hoped at least that you were happy here," he said.

"So I am," said Paul eagerly, "it is not that I want to go back, except to see my grandmother. That place, La Navette, I hate it." A shiver passed over him now, a look dawned in his eyes which filled Godwin with uneasiness.

"I would far rather that you never went back to France again, Paul; why need you think of such a thing?"

"Because I love my grandmother. Besides, I made a promise: I mean to keep it too," the boy said. "Some people forget easily. but I—if ever I were to, forget I think I should never forgive myself." He threw back his head as he spoke, every line of his slight figure betokening strong resolution. Then noting his father's expression, almost involuntarily, he added: "You will let me go back later on?"

For a moment his question remained unanswered, and in that

moment there rushed into his mind a sudden recollection of Madame de Follet's words, "Perhaps your father will wish you to forget." True, Paul wrote every month to his grandmother, and no one ever attempted to interfere with his letters; but in the absence of all outside sympathy a sense of unreality was already creeping over his correspondence. He was conscious now of a host of conflicting ideas, of a sense of defeat; times had changed, and he with them. That possibility once hinted at of not loving his father, had now become a part of the impossible. His very words, "you will let me go?" showed the change in his attitude from the old "I will." None the less, the promise made could not be passed by or easily abandoned. Ever since he had left La Navette his childish imagination had pictured Madame de Follet standing all alone on the shore, gazing out seaward, waiting for him. How would it be if she were to wait in vain? The remembrance of her face, sad, and desolate, rose now before him with a vividness "sharp as reproach," and his father's silence came upon him like the first clash of wills between those he most revered. To any child such a moment must be a terrible one.

Leaning forward he said at last, in desperation, "Father, do you wish me to break my promise?"

The strong painful vibration of the young voice, the beseeching eyes, the unusual pallor of the boyish lips, swept over Godwin, filling him with distress. Whatever may have been his own wishes, he was not proof against this entreaty. In this life the pain of one soul often buys the peace of another! Laying his hand on Paul's shoulder he said; "No, boy, no! I do not ask you to break your promise. When you are older, if you still wish to revisit La Navette I will not hinder you; neither am I so ungrateful as to wish you to forget your good grandmother. You must not misunderstand my silence; it arises from no lack of sympathy. But there are so many painful memories connected with the past, that it could not be good for either of us to discuss them; and you know that as well as I do."

He spoke kindly, tenderly even, but in his voice there was so much sadness that Paul could not attempt to prolong the discussion. He had gained the needed permission, and that was sufficient to satisfy him. Looking up gratefully, with the air of a person relieved from a heavy burden, he turned now and left the room.

But his father gazed after him with a sigh that was almost a groan.

At that moment if he had his will, he would have buried La Navette fathoms deep at the bottom of the sea ; nay, more, it almost seemed to him that he would have laid down his own life gladly, could he have held to those childish lips that so seldom smiled, a draught from the waters of Lethe.

(To be continued.)

The Late Margaret Hungerford.

By HELEN C. BLACK.

AMONG the women writers of the age, the clever and brilliant little novelist, Mrs. Hungerford, occupied a prominent position. From the time that she gave to the public her first book, "Phyllis," written at the early age of eighteen, her works have enjoyed a vast popularity in every quarter of the English speaking globe, no less for the wholesomeness of tone and the human interest displayed, than for the ready wit, the merriment that bubbles over and so often melts into pathos, the poetic and vivid descriptions of scenery, and the occasional dramatic touches that so characterise her writings. And these writings were a reflection of her own pure and tender heart, her strongly sympathetic temperament, her bright and optimistic nature that refused to see aught but the best side of people and of things.

Never seeking nor caring for notoriety, Mrs. Hungerford's life was a poem in itself. The moving spirit in a most devoted family circle, occupied with incessant literary work, with her flowers, her poultry yard, and countless country pursuits, she cared but little to mingle with the world of society and of fashion. Her joys and pleasures lay close to hand, and in her home, her husband and children, she found her chiefest delight. Yet it was no narrowed life that she led. On the rare occasions when business called her to London, she and her husband—lovers to the last—thoroughly enjoyed a few days recreation among the picture galleries, the theatres, and in the society of a few dear and valued friends, and would then count the hours

that restored them to their peaceful, picturesque Irish home and the eager welcome of the children. A home now left desolate ! She was seized with the most severe form of typhoid fever during the last days of October, 1836. For many weeks, her strong vitality and good constitution gave cause for hope, then came a period of despair, again a rally, and after repeated relapses, she succumbed on Sunday morning, January 24th, and, surrounded by those she loved so well, passed peacefully away to the silent land, "where beyond these voices there is peace." Over the grief of her bereaved ones a veil must be drawn, and I go back to the early days when her literary career, destined to be so successful, first began.

From childhood her natural proclivities were strongly marked, and some of the little stories and fairy-tales that she wrote and related to her play-fellows are still to be seen in her childish caligraphy. At the age of sixteen, she devoted herself seriously, or I may say gaily, to literature as a profession, but nothing was published until "Phyllis" was launched by Messrs. Smith and Elder, the book having been read and accepted for them by Mr. James Payn, then their reader.

Not to every young author does success come at once, or such a success. The novel went into many editions at home and abroad, brought her many orders from Transatlantic journals, and, as she used modestly to remark, was a "constant surprise" to her. "Molly Bawn" quickly followed and largely increased her fame; under the title of that book, which "made her name," she veiled her identity for many years, and continued to produce in rapid succession a number of fresh, lively and fascinating stories which are to be found in every circulating library in the kingdom, as also in the Tauchnitz edition.

"Mrs. Geoffrey," "Portia," "Rosemoyne," "Nora Creina," "Airy Fairy Lilian," are among her earlier efforts, but there has been no break in the series; "A Life's Remorse," "Nor Wife Nor Maid"—two thrilling and dramatic works—"A Born Coquette," "Under-currents," "Lady Patty"—a clever society sketch—"The Professor's Experiment," and many other novels—in all about forty—together with innumerable short stories, have emanated from her ever-ready pen. She lived to see published a late book, a collection of sparkling, clever tales, under the title of "An Anxious Moment," of which the final chapter, "How I write my novels," reads with touching significance, as though in describing her method of work, she were leav-

ing a last legacy to the readers who loved her so well. She had written yet two more books, entitled "The Coming of Chloe," and "Lovice," which will shortly be issued.

Originally descended from a distinguished old Scottish family, Mrs. Hungerford's forbears had come over from Scotland to Ireland in the reign of James I. She was the grand-daughter of John Hamilton, of Vesington, Dunboyne—a property some twelve miles out of Dublin—and the daughter of the late Rev. Canon Hamilton, Rector and Vicar Choral of St. Faughnan's Cathedral, one of the oldest churches in Ireland. Left, when scarcely of full age, a young widow with three infant daughters, she married again in 1882, Mr. Thomas Henry Hungerford, whose father's estate, Cahirmore, lies about twenty miles west of his now widowed home, St. Brenda's, Bandon, Co. Cork, where are left three more motherless little ones, two boys and a girl.

And now the joyous, useful and active life is untimely cut off, while yet in the glad summer of her days and in the zenith of her fame. Universally beloved and mourned, she has passed to the Great Beyond "Until the day break and the shadows flee away."

Englishwomen in Modern Literature.

By A. CLARKE WHITE.

ONE can hardly fail to notice, in making any record of the women writers of our day, how marked a contrast exists between the first fifty years and the latter half of the present century. The former period produced few of any merit, if we except one or two charming story and song writers, whose work was as much ahead of their times as they were themselves intellectually; while, dating from 1850 onwards, our literature has been enriched by the genius of George Eliot, the Brontës and Mrs. Gaskell, to say nothing of the novelists of our own day. In every art there are those who are "born too soon," and for this offence it has been observed that they rarely escape punishment by Fate, to whom opposition, voluntary or involuntary, to the general order of things, is resented, generally by failure, sometimes by a fame that is the reverse of glorious.

When it is remembered that no day schools for girls existed in England till about 1843, and that, while the education of boys was provided for in foundations, grammar schools, universities and the like, that of their sisters was confined exclusively to what could be taught at home, either by mother or governess (the latter only competent to impart a smattering of accomplishments more or less useless for every-day life) such a state of intellectual dryness is not so remarkable as it at first appears. It was considered "vulgar" for a woman to invade the territory occupied by the other sex, and a "blue stocking" was an abomination to all well regulated minds, male or female.

"Attention through the day her duties claimed,
And to be useful as resigned she aimed."

In the face of so much opposition it is scarcely surprising that most women should submit to mute inglorious silence, even supposing that they entertained any aspirations towards the Muses. It would be a courageous woman indeed who would face the disapproval and hostility of her friends, as well as the satire and ridicule of the world in general, to follow the thorny path of literature in the early part of the century. The few who did so were women whose position enabled them to ignore the world's ridicule or blame. Fanny Burney, who was in Queen Charlotte's court, attained popularity rather from the lively descriptions of the persons and manners of her times than from any special literary merit in her novels. Jane Austen, who followed her, has a brilliant, satirical wit, and her characters are life-like at a time when it was unfashionable to be natural. No other names stand out from the rank and file for a period of thirty or forty years subsequently, and, knowing what English society and English tastes were in the early Victorian years, we are hardly surprised at the dearth of women writers; the soil was barren that should have produced them, for when the average young woman is trained in the belief that a seventeen-inch waist, sloping shoulders and hair neatly plastered over the ears, are more pleasing in the eyes of men than an intelligent acquaintance with her language and its literature, we must admit, even if we deplore, that there was small incentive towards the cultivation of genius.

There are, however, one or two to whom no stimulus other than the natural spur of genius was needed. Of these the names of Harriet Martineau, the Brontës and Mary Somerville serve to show how widely varied a woman's genius can be—as varied and ubiquitous as a man's.

Each one of this triad was, as it were, a forerunner and herald of the new and good time coming for women. The favouring auspices of the latter half of the century, following on the foundation in 1848 of Queen's College, and a few years later of Bedford College for Women, broke the spell that had so long kept them mere domestic automatons and aroused in the feminine heart a spirit of emulation which has led them on to high and ever higher achievements. A girl is no longer handicapped by social prejudices, nor laughed at for her presumption in attempting to tread in man's footsteps. On the contrary, she is, to a great extent, accorded the same educational privileges as her brothers. She may begin at a High School, go through a course of lectures and examinations of appalling stiffness, and finish her curriculum at Girton or Newnham, whence she may bear away the blushing honours of a B.A. or even an M.A. degree. And so the old order changeth, ever making way for the new!

Very naturally, as it seems, the increasing intellectual power of women is most apparent in the realm of fiction, which, as good old Izaak Walton said of fishing, is "a gentle craft," and one in which she well holds her own. Given the necessary mental culture, originality and ability to express thoughts and ideas lucidly, there is nothing unfeminine or "strong minded" in the occupation. It is one that may be followed at home in the most cloistral seclusion—provided the lady-writer is not a journalist or a critic—and there is very little doubt that the influence of literary work upon its devotees is stimulating and elevating. Who that has met authors of any reputation has not been impressed by the wit, the sparkle and the interest of their conversation? If this is so in the case of men, it is still more marked in women, who unite to these qualities the rarer gifts—*savoir-vivre* and tact.

Romance is an integral part of woman's nature, from the time when a doll is the recipient of all the embryonic feminine instincts of love and maternity, to the period when she awakes to the reality of passion and that hero-worship of which romance is born. Romance writing comes almost naturally to a woman; a hero and a heroine; love-happy or the reverse, and a plot woven of the fortunes of the lovers through many chapters of vicissitude and adversity to a final chime of wedding bells, is a first principle to the feminine mind, and this enlarged, varied by complex motives, periods and individualities of style, is the groundwork of a woman's novel. Someone has said that the best

book ever written would not make up to a man for the loss of his daily paper, but the converse only is true of woman; if she can have romance she will even dispense with the "Telegraph."

Seeing then that the romantic enters so largely into her nature, it is rather surprising that women-poets are so rare. Of notable mark there are none, unless we except Mrs. Browning and George Eliot. Our grandmothers read Mrs. Hemans, Eliza Cooke, "L. E. L." and the like—"pretty little poems," says Stopford Brooke, "having no inward fire, no idea, no marked character. They might be written by any versifier at any time, and express pleasant indifferent thought in pleasant verse." To the modern criticism these ladies seemed to have enjoyed an easily earned reputation. It has been said that they were good enough for their time, but this appears a rather unjust judgment of work that was always conscientious, and often charming. To attain to any eminence in poetry requires, it would seem, a wider grasp of the philosophy of life than women, as yet, are able to bring to the subject. A comprehensive, keen-sighted view of its joys and tragedies, together with perfect responsiveness to its many calls, is an absolute necessity to the true poet. Women, without doubt, possess the latter gift very largely, but they lack the intellectual traditions, the rich store of inherited brain power that is almost a man's birthright. Many generations must yet pass before this stultification of her mental faculties is outgrown, and, as Dr. Johnson ungraciously said of the lady orator, the wonder is, knowing the thousand deterrent influences against which she has had to contend, not that she should write poor poetry, but that she should write it at all.

Poor, however, is not the word to apply to either Mrs. Browning or George Eliot. Professor Craik, who is certainly a judicious critic, has said of Mrs. Browning that "the only real poets the age can boast of are Tennyson, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning." This is high praise, for though in some respects her work might be bracketted with that of the other two poets, it is, so far as fulness and lyrical sweetness go, far behind Tennyson, while it equally lacks the breadth and bold originality that characterise her husband's work. The portrait of Marian Erle is one of the best passages, perhaps, in her fine poem of "Aurora Leigh," a poem which will always have a place among our classics, both for its beauty of form and the many touches of genius it contains.

George Eliot's claims as a poetess find, perhaps, fewer advocates,

but she, of all women writers, has a peculiarly masculine grasp of idea and treats with virile power such subjects as "A College Breakfast Party," "A Minor Prophet," &c. It would be impossible to cavil, however, at the tender simplicity of her lyrics, such for instance as "Sweet evenings come and go, love," nor with the fervour and thrill that grows as one reads "O, may I join the choir invisible," the concluding lines of which are so significant of a noble woman's aspirations that we may be pardoned for quoting them.

" May I reach

That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense :
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

There are so few other women poets of any distinction that only a brief mention of them here is necessary. Christina Rossetti, who had a delicate mystical touch ; Francis Ridley Havergal, famous in the religious world, and Adelaide Proctor, a lyric writer of some ability, are all that will occur to the reader as worthy of any claim to the title.

But if, among those who wear the laurel, women must be contented for the present with a lower place, she need not be satisfied with any but a front rank in fiction, for in this branch of literature she is man's rival, and presses him hard in the race. The readiness with which women avail themselves of any opportunity in which their talents or their versatility may find congenial openings, is nowhere more seen than in this direction. Here, as before observed, all her romantic tendencies have a free hand and full play, and she can follow her imagination whithersoever it leads. Culture, which, since it has been more readily placed within her reach, has done so much for her, has here found a most congenial soil, and has taken deep and lasting root. In other branches of literature,—for instance the metaphysical, theological and philosophic—she has not, so far, been allowed a fair and equal competition with men, access to the founts of such knowledge having been, till quite recently, denied to her. How far she might have ventured, and to what extent her new found energy would have carried her in these paths, we can only surmise by the enthu-

siasm with which she has entered on those from which the barriers have been removed.

A favourite imputation brought against woman is her conservatism. This, surely, is fallacious, for even the least observant of her critics do not fail to charge her at the same time with variableness and love of change. It is obvious that one of these statements must be incorrect, and—so far at least as art is concerned—we are glad to think that she is impressionable, and therefore receptive, *ergo*, in this respect anything but Conservative. On the contrary, women, generally speaking, show decided leanings to the opposition. In her home life, she may, to a certain extent, mould her surroundings according to tradition, but even then she is not slow to think for herself in the matter of *régime* and management, and a mother of to-day acts on very different lines from those that regulated life for her great-grandmother at the beginning of the century. So, in her readiness to adopt new spheres of activity and what are called "advanced" views of life, her attitude is distinctly progressive. The modern woman by no means considers work, either in its active forms of teaching, nursing, and the like, or the more passive ones of authorship and journalism, as derogatory, although the well-regulated young woman of fifty or sixty years ago would have condemned it as "shocking." When the door to freedom was unbarred she did not hug her fetters, preferring servitude, but went out into the new light and life—to liberty. If the light was at first dazzling, the air intoxicating, and liberty too often a luring will-o'-the-wisp that led to disappointment, there was that in her nature which steadied, guided, and taught endurance—a springing well of energy and hope, that would not be discouraged, and that no difficulties or obstacles had power to baffle. The sterner fibre of which man is made is not wanting in woman, for it is notorious that she will bear uncomplainingly both physical and mental trials that break down masculine fortitude. Pluck has always been accounted a specially English virtue, and the English soldier never knows when he is beaten. It is only true to say also of an Englishwoman that she never knows when to "give in." Once the educational barrier removed, women availed themselves in eager, ever-increasing numbers of the privileges hitherto so grudgingly withheld, and the modern girl has often a wider curriculum of study than her brothers. Embarked on a career, whether it takes her from home or can be pursued under its protect-

ing shelter, she brings all her energy and enthusiasm to bear on her work, and, in spite (alas, too often!) of defective physique and constitutional disabilities, goes indomitably on to the end she has in view. Failures there are of course, and sadly clouded endings to promising careers, but these are nearly always due to a break-down of health, for in her newly found energy she has not yet acquired the wisdom of husbanding her resources. "It is better to wear out than rust out," she will say in reply to a friendly remonstrance, and only when the much-tried brain and overworked body rebel, will she reluctantly admit to herself that there is such a thing as excess of zeal.

The time will come, however, when the first exuberance of this new enthusiasm will tone down to a soberer view of life, and women will wake to the expediency of discretion in work as well as in pleasure, added to the primal lesson of life that you cannot eat your cake and have it, but it must not be overlooked that self-sacrifice and renunciation are essentially feminine traits. Therefore we see this contradiction of the sexes, that a man will leave his business behind with the closing of the office door, and go lightly off to his club or a theatre, but a woman goes home from a day's work at teaching, art schools, music, or the drudgery of clerkship work, to take up another task—study for an examination, typewriting, or literary work of some kind. Even if she does none of these, there is always the never-failing needlework and home duties, which are super-added to a business woman's time and patience. Life is still hard for women in spite of the ameliorations these latter days have brought to her lot; hard, that is, in the strenuousness of the daily toil, which often equals man's in its responsibility, while it lacks the compensation of equality in remuneration, position and preferment.

None of these things, happily, affect her in the open field of literature, where there is no more favour for man than for woman, and where the prizes are within reach of both—as with equal justice are also the blanks in the lottery. She is even more at home here than in music or painting, for, except as a reproducer, few women are specially gifted with artistic genius; she is a far better exponent of music than a composer, and rises to no distinction as an artist in painting or sculpture, while her histrionic power is in marked contrast to her want of skill as a playwright. It seems, up to the present time, therefore, superfluous to deny that women are imitators rather

than originators, and it is no aspersion on the sex to say so. But, after all, imitation is only the first step in progress. The child imitates all it sees and hears till it is old enough to think for itself; then, although the imitative faculty does not disappear, it becomes modified by varied influences and surroundings, and, when there is any mental ability, it develops into originality and inventiveness. This is but the first and imitative stage in woman's mental development, though there are many signs that the second and creative is not far off. "So much," as a learned Oxford professor lately said, "is put into women's heads that surely something *must* come out!" This may be sarcastic on the part of the professor, but there is no denying the logic of the statement. Much *has* been put into their heads in the way of a wide and varied education, and we have a right to look for rich results as the outcome of all this training. In one direction they are already evident, and, as has been said before, only time is needed for them to be equally apparent in others.

When Charlotte Brontë and her sisters, that "weird family," wrote their wonderful epoch-making stories in the remote Yorkshire parsonage, their work was done almost by stealth, and under discouragements that would have effectually disheartened any less gifted writers. But, like George Eliot, their genius was too great for failure, and difficulties only increased their ardour. We know how Charlotte tried publisher after publisher with "*Jane Eyre*" till it was accepted by Smith, Elder and Co., and we know that this is only one of numerous parallel cases. There is no royal road to success in any branch of work, and though some few have greatness thrust upon them, the majority only achieved it by patient, dogged perseverance, and in this, women often set an example to men. George Eliot's success came after many years of waiting; Jane Austen, Mrs. Gaskell, Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, and others, only came to the front slowly, and it has been left to one or two privileged favourites of fortune, like Olive Schreiner and Marie Corelli, to attain an early and general popularity. The cause of this capriciousness in the reading public is difficult to determine, if it be not, as the unsuccessful sarcastically assert, in the amount of advertising a popular book receives in its early career. It is hardly exaggeration to say that advertisement is the mother of success in the literary as well as in the commercial world, and a book that is unheralded remains unhonoured and unsung, generally finding an early resting place on the back shelves of bookstalls and lending-

libraries—if it ever gets there. But an equally important factor in success is a good publisher. The names of certain firms bear an authority that is almost undisputed, and the works issued from their press are generally received with respect, although, it is on record, that the best publishers have occasionally been known to issue a dull book, that not even the credit of their name sufficed to provide with a circulation. Even a good publisher and “bold advertisement” does not always keep a book from falling flat, as many an author of more than average merit has sometimes found to his cost. A special “boom” will bring notoriety to a mediocre work, while a beautiful poem, a clever novel, or a painstaking scientific treatise will fail to hit the mark, because the time is not ripe for their appearance, or the public attention is occupied with a Parliamentary election or a more or less important crisis in South Africa. How to seize the right moment for publication is difficult to define; and, after all, the matter is usually left to the publisher, who presumably knows the market best, and the time and season for producing a work. No one who knew his trade would issue, for instance, ghost stories in summer time, or manuals of field sports at Christmas. It may be safely asserted, therefore, that the best introduction to a book is a good publishing firm, and it is pleasant to see that most of our modern authoresses have secured this advantage for their works.

It would be almost impossible to touch on all the talented women who have contributed to our modern literature; many are in the front rank as novelists, and an ever-increasing number are making names for themselves as editors and journalists. The light and bright touch of a woman's hand is seen to advantage in the sketchy articles so much affected in newspapers of to-day, and her ready wit is never at a loss for a subject that is neither heavy nor dull.

The discursiveness with which women are credited conversationally is happily banished from their writings. It exists perhaps in a few instances, but to no marked extent, and most certainly not more than in contemporary writers of the male sex. For example, masterly as the book is, and absorbing in interest, it cannot be denied that Zangwill's novel, “The Master,” is singularly discursive in parts, and markedly so at the end of the story; while the only woman writer whose work can be accused of the same fault is Mrs. Humphrey Ward, who is somewhat diffuse in “David Grieve.” However, even discursiveness is not always unpardonable, and we can forgive it when

the interest of the story does not seriously suffer, as it certainly does not in either of the books mentioned : in hands of less ability it is quite conceivable that the philosophising of the one, and the speculative analysis of the other, might not only bore the reader but seriously mar the success of the book. On the other hand, it is questionable whether the popular taste for the frothy and flippant, the shallow and specious, should find encouragement from authors who "write down" to their public. We are fond of talking about the "refining" influence of literature, but when we glance over some of the specimens displayed on bookstalls, let us say (the effusions of women-writers as well as men), it is hard to imagine what benefit anyone can derive from their silly vulgarity. And here, be it remarked, one cannot fail to wonder as to what may be considered fit and proper reading and what may not. It is useless to say it is a matter of opinion, and that each one is free to read what he or she pleases. On the contrary it is a matter of the bookstall owner's opinion, and if he disapproves of any writer the works of that unfortunate author or authoress will find no place on his boards. Of course a bookseller is untroubled by prejudices of this sort, or we should be in a parlous state indeed, and our mental pabulum might become seriously limited. Refinement does not necessarily mean priggishness any more than it means dullness, and in proof we need only mention the delightfully simple stories of Mary E. Wilkins, the clever American authoress, or, among our own countrywomen, Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Thackeray. There is no question as to the charm, simplicity and delicate humour of Mrs. Gaskell's writings, nor of Miss Thackeray's refined imaginativeness, in whose work there is an old-world aroma as of lavender and rose-leaves. Only genius can so handle homely subjects as to transmute them into the gold of romance. There is nothing more simple or more everyday in character than "Cranford" life, for instance, where the most stirring event for years is a conjuror's visit ; yet, if Mrs. Gaskell only "chronicles small beer" she does so in such an inimitable and fascinating manner that one falls in love with Miss Matty straight away, and stands in awe of Miss Jemima from the very beginning as though they were very flesh and blood.

For freshness, too, and English that is as pure as it is often poetical, Miss Thackeray's "Old Kensington" is unrivalled. Her word painting is so descriptive that, once read, who can forget the picture of the old

house with its ivy-grown walls; the ancient elms with their cawing rooks; the plashing dilapidated fountain, and the lilacs drooping round it in the long rank grass. The red, windy sunsets Dolly saw from her window through the bare tracery of trees in winter, and the rich luxuriance and scented air that filled the wild overgrown garden in summer. One owes a lasting debt of gratitude to a writer who can give us word pictures such as these. Descriptive writing of real merit is not very common in women, even our best rather suggest than paint, and the "bright, particular star" George Eliot, had the gift but slightly developed. Present day writers, if we except Mrs. Humphrey Ward, who describes scenery very naturally and charmingly, have hardly a trace of it.

The study and analysis of character, together with the depicting of various types of society and individuals, seems to be a faculty shared equally by men and women. It is an art that reached its high-water mark in Thackeray and George Eliot, for Hardy, faithful portrayer as he is of the passions that sway human life, seems to see only the sad and sombre, and is but a poor delineator of the average and ordinary, and is entirely lacking in humour.

George Eliot's horizon was wider. She could give us a Mrs. Poyser as well as a Romola; an Aunt Glegg and a Silas Marner, and her treatment of one is as perfect as the other. Commonplace life and commonplace people were not beneath the dignity of her pen; she does not attempt to idealise them, but represents them to us as worthy of a place in fiction.

"It is a sordid life, you say, this of the Tullivers and Dodsons, irradiated by no sublime principles, no romantic visions, no active, self-renouncing faith; moved by none of those wild, uncontrollable passions which make the dark shadows of misery and crime . . . we need not shrink from this comparison of small things with great; for does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest. It is surely the same with the observation of human life."

Few women have the gift of depicting tragedy with such a sense of reality as George Eliot; but it surprised the world and the critics one day in the unknown work of an unknown woman, a young girl, indeed, when there appeared "The Story of an African Farm." If there is any crudity about the work it is in form only, and in an occasional abruptness of language. Thought, insight, and passionate

intensity are there, so that we are blind to defects which, after all, only serve to heighten the remarkable talent displayed from the first to the last page. Here is living, throbbing, passionate life, hemmed in by the very narrowest, meanest conditions; characters sordid, sublime, despicable, vulgar, all met with in one small African farm on the confines of civilization; all intensely interesting because so life-like. One may never have met a Taut Sannie or a Bonaparte Smith, but we know and recognise the type, and our impulse is so strong to spurn the selfish impostor, that it even becomes a consolation to know that he is only a brain figment. The complex character of Lyndall is less attractive than it should be, though one is in sympathy with her rebellion against a society that decrees such a wide difference between what is right for man and woman. In a characteristic speech she says—

"We stand here at this gate this morning, both poor, both young, both friendless; there is not much to choose between us. Let us turn away just as we are, to make our way in life. This evening you will come to a farmer's house. The farmer, albeit you come alone and on foot, will give you a pipe of tobacco and a cup of coffee and a bed. If he has no dam to build, and no child to teach, to-morrow you can go on your way with a friendly greeting of the hand. I, if I come to the same place to-night, will have strange questions asked me, strange glances cast on me. The Boer-wife will shake her head and give me food to eat with the Kaffirs, and a right to sleep with the dogs. That would be the first step in our progress, a very little one, but every step to the end would repeat it. We were equals once when we lay new-born babes on our nurses knee. We will be equals again when they tie up our jaws for the last sleep."

The poetic faculty is not wanting in "Dreams," or perhaps it would be better to say that a pretty sentiment is here clothed in poetic language. Allegories are risky things to handle, and a little of them goes a long way. As a rule they are far-fetched and cloudily interpreted, and few there be who find the clue to a solution. Olive Schriener yearns much in this volume, but one might venture to say that if she had not previously written "The Story of an African Farm" we should probably not have seen "Dreams."

A certain school has arisen within the last decade or so, whose principal feminine exponents are Edna Lyall, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and, quite recently, Marie Corelli. Their tendency is best expressed by the term quasi-religious, as opposed to those distinctly religious

stories by writers such as Sarah Fraser-Tytler, Mrs Craik, Miss Worboise, &c. The dictum that demand creates supply is less fallacious than most proverbial assertions, and it is a rather remarkable sign of the times that the religious novel—pure and simple—is giving place to the quasi-religious. The world, the flesh, and the devil are a combination no longer needing a special clause in the catechism, but a triad resembling an algebraical problem—each requiring the other for its perfect explanation—take away one and the others are nullified. These writers offer us their theology in the disguise of a novel. Now we know that orthodoxy and heterodoxy are interchangeable terms. "Orthodoxy is my doxy, heterodoxy is the other man's doxy," has been ably said, so that after all the effort of the quasi-religious novelist is abortive, for in the land of two hundred and ninety odd sects, it is evident that an author can only secure the adhesion of a limited minority. Of the three writers we have mentioned two are sufficiently vague in setting forth their views to avoid, either wittingly or unwittingly, the pitfalls into which plainer speech would have led them, while the third wages undisguised war against Freethought. Marie Corelli is essentially "mystic," and Mrs. Ward is scarcely theological.

When Mrs. Ward wrote "*Robert Ellesmere*," great was the discussion as to the advisability of publishing novels with an "upsetting" tendency. Critics were at variance, newspaper columns were invaded by correspondents who took kaleidoscopic views of the matter, and it was not possible anywhere, where two or three were gathered together, to avoid the inevitable argument. It was left unsettled and remains unsettled, and although Mrs. Ward, only a year or two after published, "*The History of David Grieve*," a book with tendencies quite as "upsetting," though not so immediately apparent as in "*Robert Ellesmere*," oddly enough little was said of her heterodoxy by press or public, though more than one complained of David's priggishness and the heavy tone of the story. Perhaps less would have been said in the other case, had not Mrs. Ward unfortunately made a clergyman the backslider, and had she not shown us, step by step, the workings of insidious doubt in the clerical mind, ending finally in the triumph of a sort of Deistic compromise between unbelief and faith. In "*David Grieve*" there is but a vague surmising, a sort of inculcation of first principles, that seems expressed in the quoted passage from David's diary.

"Probably the two worlds" (the public and the clergy) "have their analogies in every religion; and what the individual has to learn in these days at once of outward debate and of unifying social aspiration, is to dissent no longer with the heat of a narrow antipathy, but with the quiet of a large sympathy."

Setting aside controversialism, there is much to admire in Mrs. Ward's books. She has a fine command of language, is well and deeply read, and has, more than most women, a certain capacity for theological argument.

Such a brief outline as this necessarily is, can only touch the mere skirts of the subject, and many clever and popular women writers must perforce remain unmentioned. It is to be hoped that enough has been said to prove that a firm foothold has been taken by woman in the literary world, and one that she is likely to keep and strengthen as time passes. The future is bright for her in many directions, and assuredly this of literature is one of the most promising. Compared with her forerunners what marvellous gifts of education, training, and influence are hers. Day by day her advance is sure and continued; year by year finds her with more privileges gained. With increasing knowledge comes increasing light—and that, as Matthew Arnold says, is the concomitant of sweetness. In the broader, purer atmosphere of high intelligence and culture, what is there of which our sisters will not be capable? Not the rivals of men, but with them "nobly mated," each working for mutual good.

The Awakening of Barbara Dusent :

OR, A CHILD OF THE MOORS. .

By S. PENDLETON.

CHAPTER I.

A SLEEPING SOUL.

"I SAY, Philip, do you think Mrs. Ferrard would have any objection to my painting Miss Dusent ? "

"No, I shouldn't imagine so," his friend returned. "I suppose you would want to depict Barbara as a moorland beauty or something of that kind," laughingly. "I thought last night that the name Alice had bestowed upon her appeared rather to impress you."

"Yes, a child of the moors," Gerard Selwyn repeated musingly. "It is certainly the character I should choose to represent her."

"You've never heard her sing, have you? She is too shy to perform before people. Besides, she has a craze for studying, and generally devotes the evening hours to her books. A little more training and her voice will be glorious. Get her to talk to you about her beloved moors, Selwyn, the subject has positively a transforming effect upon her. Here she comes," he added.

The two young men stood still to watch a little party advancing slowly up the winding walk of the well-kept garden. The distinguishing figure of the group was a tall, slim girl, who held herself with a certain inborn interesting grace. Two small boys were clinging to her hands, whilst behind walked an elderly lady with two little girls.

"Your sister is not with them," Gerard Selwyn observed.

"No, indeed !" Philip Ferrard returned. "Alice makes the most of her newly acquired liberty, and eschews almost entirely the society of her small brothers and sisters. The children adore Barbara."

The intense gravity of the girl's face was broken by a faint smile as she approached the young men.

Her cousin laid a detaining hand upon her, while the governess and her charges passed into the house.

"Never mind the small fry, Barbara ; come along, Mr. Selwyn

has promised to exhibit his sketches this afternoon. I know you will enjoy looking at them," Philip said. His pride in his friend's work was great.

"Mother and Alice haven't got back from Hardcastle's yet," he added as they went indoors.

Barbara Dusent regarded Mr. Selwyn with a certain amount of awe; she would gladly have foregone the proposed treat in order to avoid his society. But Philip was persistent, and in spite of her whispered refusal, led her past the schoolroom door to the room beyond, which had been temporarily fitted up as a studio for Mr. Selwyn. Barbara paused a moment before the newly begun portrait of Mrs. Ferrard, which stood upon an easel.

"You mustn't pronounce upon that until it has had a few days' work, Miss Dusent," Mr. Selwyn remarked, with a smile as he stood beside her.

"What a noise those children make," Philip said. Noticing that the door of communication between the rooms was open, he hastily closed it, adding a warning to them to stay in their own quarters.

"Now then, Selwyn," he cried. "Look here, Barbara."

A low exclamation of delight broke from the girl's lips, when Gerard Selwyn placed in her hands a dainty portrayal of a moorland sunset.

"How very beautiful," she murmured. "It is almost like a bit of Harborough, only," lifting her frank eyes to the artist's face, "this moor is more perfect than Harborough, that is, wilder and more rugged."

Selwyn bit his lips. The sketch had been painted during the spring, when he had spent a fortnight within sight of the moors upon which Barbara Dusent lavished the devotion of an enthusiast. Barbara had unconsciously laid bare the weakness of his work.

Philip, busily turning over the contents of a portfolio, did not notice his friend's discomfiture. The sketch was hastily put away before the name scrawled on the back had caught Barbara's eye. Selwyn did not bring forth any other delineation of Harborough. He contented himself with showing his youthful critic the beauties of a picturesque village, with whose charms he was totally unacquainted. As he was replacing the last of these, the door opened and a tall fair-haired girl entered. Selwyn dropped the portfolio and advanced to meet her. "We have been endeavouring to wile

away one dreary half-hour of your absence by turning over my sketches," he informed her, in low tones.

"How could you absent yourself for three whole hours, Miss Ferrard?" he asked reproachfully.

"Is it so long?" Alice Ferrard returned, with eyebrows prettily lifted.

"Oh, Mr. Selwyn," the next moment, "don't allow mamma to make any alteration in the dress she is wearing for her portrait. Mrs. Hardcastle has almost talked her into doing so."

"Certainly I will not," he replied promptly. "Besides, the idea was yours, therefore," with emphasis, "nothing would induce me to accept any change."

"If my daughter has won you over to her side, I'm afraid I shall be powerless to move you, Mr. Selwyn," a laughing voice broke in.

Gerard Selwyn turned quickly; Mrs. Ferrard stood at his elbow.

"You are quite right," he returned, gaily. "Besides," in graver tones, "nothing could possibly suit you better than this, Mrs. Ferrard," pointing to the gown faintly indicated upon the canvas.

With a satisfied glance at her pictured charms, Mrs. Ferrard moved towards the table where her son and her niece were still absorbed in the contemplation of Mr. Selwyn's sketches.

"How long will it take you to paint mamma's portrait?" Alice asked.

"I don't quite know. I hope you are not in a hurry to get rid of me, Miss Ferrard," Mr. Selwyn laughingly retorted, "for I have not the smallest intention of scamping my work. I have only been at Wayflete two days," he added, in tones that were tenderly reproachful.

"Time goes very slowly sometimes," she returned in a bantering tone.

"It does," he cried promptly, "I can testify to the truth of that from my own experience this afternoon."

Before Alice had time to frame a suitable reply the dressing-bell rang, and she slipped away, a ripple of amusement on her lips.

"I hope the noise of the little ones does not disturb you, Mr. Selwyn?" Mrs. Ferrard observed next morning, when the artist was working at her portrait.

"Not in the least," he replied, "I like to hear them. They appear extremely fond of their cousin, Miss Dusent," he added, glad

to have an opportunity of introducing the name of the girl who was exercising his thoughts.

"Of Barbara? oh yes. She is quite devoted to them. Some girls of her age would not be sensible enough to see the wisdom of the seclusion which my niece appears to enjoy. Poor child, she had a dreary existence until she came to us a year ago. Mr. Trevor, her guardian, is comparatively a young man, with a passion for exploring strange quarters of the globe. Upon Barbara becoming his ward, he handed her over to the care of his sister, an elderly and eccentric spinster. Miss Trevor appeared to consider that she was peculiarly fitted to educate Barbara, and, in spite of her brother's feeble protests, she insisted upon undertaking the task. Consequently the poor girl had her head crammed with all sorts of odd theories, and was taught everything that was antiquated and out of date. Barbara feels her deficiencies keenly. Fortunately she is remarkably quick, and most anxious to make up for lost time. Miss Manvers reports her to be making rapid progress."

"I understand Mr. Trevor is in Africa at present. When he arrives in England, he wishes Barbara to return to Harborough. However, I hope to induce him to allow her to remain with us. I consider it cruel to keep a girl immured in such intense solitude."

"Harborough is an awfully weird spot," Selwyn remarked, as he bent a critical gaze upon his work. "Is it not? I don't know how Miss Trevor supports existence there."

"Barbara professes to like those surroundings. But I'm inclined to think she is already transferring her attachment from Harborough to Wayflete."

"I think the name you have given your cousin is a singularly appropriate one, Miss Ferrard," Mr. Selwyn observed, turning to Alice, who, seated by the window engaged upon some elaborate embroidery, had taken no part in the foregoing conversation.

"It was when she first came to us," Alice responded brightly. "But Barbara has already lost much of her quaintness—sometimes it was too delicious. Don't you think she would make a good subject for a picture, Mr. Selwyn?"

"No doubt," he returned, with assumed carelessness.

"Paint her and let it be the picture of the year," Alice suggested playfully.

"Perhaps she would object to sit for me," he answered in the same light vein.

"I don't think she would refuse if I were to ask her," Alice rejoined. "Barbara is very good-natured. What do you think of the project, mamma?"

"I am afraid Barbara will not be willing to sacrifice so large a portion of her time," Mrs. Ferrard replied cautiously.

"I shall not be exacting in that respect," Gerard Selwyn urged, "two or three sittings will quite suit my purpose."

"Barbara is going past the window now, I will fetch her, then we shall hear what the person principally concerned has to say in the matter," and Alice left the room with swift steps.

Barbara looked slightly bewildered when she appeared in the wake of her impetuous cousin a few minutes later. She glanced inquiringly from her aunt to Mr. Selwyn.

Mrs. Ferrard took upon herself to explain.

"Mr. Selwyn would like you to sit to him for a picture he is contemplating, that is all, Barbara. Are you willing, dear? Of course it shall be just as you wish."

"Do, Barbara," Alice pleaded, "then when the picture is viewed by admiring crowds we can go and criticise it also."

"Miss Dusent, won't you consent to make your cousin's charming plan a possibility?" Mr. Selwyn asked, laying down his brush.

"Yes, if you wish it," Barbara agreed slowly. Too shy to refuse, she was yet completely in the dark as to why the artist could possibly desire to paint her, for Barbara Dusent was utterly unconscious of her own rare picturesque beauty.

"Alice, whatever were you thinking of to put such an idea into Gerard Selwyn's head?" Mrs. Ferrard asked when they were alone. "Now Barbara and he will be constantly thrown together, a catastrophe I was most anxious to avoid."

"Why, mamma," Alice returned amazedly, "don't you think intercourse with a man like Gerard Selwyn will be decidedly beneficial to Barbara? She is quite morbidly shy at times."

"Possibly," Mrs. Ferrard rejoined drily. "But as you are not actually engaged to Gerard Selwyn, it would have been an act of wisdom had you endeavoured to keep them apart until after that desirable consummation. He is just the man to find a girl like Barbara Dusent wonderfully attractive. My brother's wife was the

most beautiful woman I ever came across, Alice; and Barbara will soon be her exact image. She has, too, a latent power of fascination which her mother did not possess. I think you have acted very foolishly. You forget that Barbara is quite an heiress, while you are almost portionless. Although Gerard Selwyn is possessed of abundant means, he has expensive habits, and not the least factor in his possible admiration for your cousin, will be the knowledge of the wealth of which she will shortly become mistress."

"It is too late to make any objection now," Alice rejoined coldly. "Besides, I thought you imagined that Mr. Trevor was in love with Barbara."

"Yes, of that fact I am quite certain. But still it is useless to take his prospects into consideration now. At the present moment he is leagues away. Given a fascinating man like Mr. Selwyn, and an impressionable girl of Barbara's stamp, the result of an intimacy between the pair is easy to foresee."

"I feel quite certain that such an idea will never enter Barbara's head. Mr. Selwyn regards her with the same amount of interest as Sophy and Ethel. I heard him telling Philip yesterday that Miss Dusent was a charmingly quaint child." And Alice left the room with an annoyed countenance.

Next morning, when Barbara was knitting her brows over a difficult page of translation, Alice claimed the fulfilment of the promise she had made to Mr. Selwyn.

Barbara followed somewhat unwillingly into the next room, where the artist was diligently painting Mrs. Ferrard's portrait.

"Oh, Barbara, are you coming to take my place?" her aunt observed. "I shall be glad to be released. You will find it a very troublesome business to maintain one attitude for any length of time. I get dreadfully weary. Now, Mr. Selwyn, you must really allow me to depart, there has been somebody waiting to speak to me for the last fifteen minutes."

"Just one moment," he said eagerly.

"Don't keep Barbara too long," Mrs. Ferrard enjoined as she at last hurried away.

"I am afraid you are prepared to regard me as something of an ogre, Miss Dusent," the artist observed pleasantly, noticing Barbara's anxious glance as he approached her and placed a chair. "There is really nothing to be afraid of," he added with a reassuring smile. He

made no attempt to pose her, a hasty sketch of her head being all he desired that morning.

Alice chatted ceaselessly during the half hour he spent over it. More than once she glanced from the artist to his sitter. In Barbara's face she read nothing, save a nervousness which made her whole attitude and manner constrained. But Alice could not help thinking that Gerard Selwyn's countenance expressed deeper feeling than the ordinary interest and absorption his work usually brought him.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER FALSE COLOURS.

Two days later, when Barbara entered the studio, she uttered an exclamation of delight at the sight of a large basket of heather which Mr. Selwyn appeared to be arranging. "You will not object to wearing some of this, I hope," he said turning to her. "Miss Ferrard will be here in a moment, she has just been called away. As I have had strict orders not to keep you above half an hour, I think we had better set to work at once."

Silently he posed her, arranging in the dusky coils of her hair, and on her dress, masses of purple heather. "Please tell me at once when you feel tired," he said, as he at last withdrew to his easel.

The days fled rapidly by. The one or two sittings Mr. Selwyn had at first asked for lengthened out into an indefinite number. The painter was burning with enthusiasm over his work. And as by this time, his engagement to Alice Ferrard had grown to be almost an accomplished fact, Mrs. Ferrard placed no embargo upon the sittings. But Barbara knew nothing of this, for Gerard Selwyn wished the engagement to remain for a time a secret; consequently the unconscious girl held daily intercourse with the man, whose commonplace nature was gaining power to quicken her whole being into life.

Slowly, but surely, Gerard Selwyn was arousing Barbara Dusent's slumbering soul. And with skilful, beautiful touches, he was transferring its dawn, stirring in her face, to his canvas. The two were seldom alone together, but Selwyn made the most of those moments, for no man was better versed than he in the art of kindling in a maiden's mind that passion called love.

He had completely fathomed his sitter's nature, and understood how to make her responsive to his slightest word, his lightest

look. Selwyn was not in love with Barbara Duent; but when the benefit and success of his calling was in question, he was absolutely unscrupulous in the methods he employed to gain a desired excellence. In this picture Gerard Selwyn knew that he had reached a height of perfection to which his work had never before attained.

One cold October morning, when Alice had left the studio, the daily sitting being over, Selwyn called Barbara to the easel. "The picture is finished now, Miss Barbara," he said gently.

During the whole of its progress, the sitter, owing to a wish expressed by the artist, had never witnessed the march of his work.

Quietly she advanced, Then, in silent amazement, beheld what appeared to her, a glorified image of herself. Could this heather crowned maiden, with the sweet, tender smile and radiant love-lit eyes be herself? For a brief space of time painter and model stood silently side by side before the easel.

"Do I look like that?" Barbara asked at last.

"Yes," he replied fervently, and for a long moment their eyes met. "In my sight, and in the eyes of all who love you."

Completely carried out of himself, Selwyn added some wild words which he would afterwards have given much to recall. But at that critical crisis, little Sophy Ferrard came flying into the room with a message, and Barbara hastened away. The knowledge that Gerard Selwyn loved her, was in its intensity almost pain.

Mrs. Ferrard was giving a dinner-party that night. Barbara spent the afternoon in her own room. After Gerard Selwyn's revelation of the morning, she was perhaps not unnaturally anxious to avoid a meeting with him, and saw with almost a feeling of satisfaction that he was wandering through the grounds with Alice.

Usually Barbara grieved her relations by arraying herself in a very indifferent manner when any festivity was impending; but she had determined to make an exception in favour of to-night. Suddenly recollecting that she had forgotten to provide herself with some flowers, the girl ran lightly down the stairs to repair the omission. She was leaving the conservatory when Alice's voice fell upon her ears. The spirit of mischief entered into Barbara, and she hastily took refuge behind a big palm, intending to spring mirthfully upon her cousin. But this design was never carried out. Alice was speaking in her customary clear tones; her listener was Mr. Selwyn.

Barbara grew white when the import of that conversation broke upon her.

"I think it is the best of anything you have painted," Alice said. "Mamma's is not to be compared with it. Don't mistake my meaning, though—youth and beauty depicted in such a manner, present a startling contrast to middle age, however well preserved. The expression of Barbara's face is really wonderful. I have never seen her look like that. How did you manage to get it? It seems to me that you have achieved an ideal representation of her."

"At first," he said slowly, "I found her an extremely difficult subject. Afterwards," in a tone of satisfaction, "I discovered that it was only necessary to play upon Miss Dusent's emotion to get the expression I desired. It is pleasant to conquer the almost impossible. Moreover, I am convinced that the picture will receive favourable notice in the highest quarters. And now, darling, with regard to our wedding. I want you to consent to my fixing an early date. Darleigh is sadly in need of a mistress, and——"

Barbara forcibly pressed her hands to her lips to repress a cry. The next moment their voices grew fainter; and unseen and unheard, Barbara glided from the conservatory.

Then, like a hunted animal, she fled in search of the picture. A small light was burning in the studio. The canvas framed in some rich drapery reposed upon an easel. Palette and brushes were lying on a table near. Barbara caught up these tools of the painter's craft, a mad frenzy urging her to obliterate that radiant semblance of herself which Gerard Selwyn had reproduced by the aid of a lie.

For a few moments conflicting emotions struggled for expression in the anguished young face. At last the bloodless conflict was over, and Barbara left the studio, the smiling, beautiful eyes in the pictured countenance seeming to follow her with a saddened gaze.

Reaching her own room, Barbara found her maid impatient to dress her. For the first time in her life, the girl placed herself passively in those skilful hands. She smiled bitterly when the woman drew her in front of the mirror at the conclusion of her labours.

Suppressed indignation and outraged feelings had lent a light to her eyes, a glow to her countenance, which absolutely transformed the shy, retiring maiden of a few hours before. For a brief space

her fortitude almost deserted her. By sheer force of will she felt capable of getting through that evening. But what of the days that were to follow? It is often when we feel ourselves well-nigh beaten that unexpected succour is at hand.

A knock came to the door, a telegram was handed in. Barbara tore it hastily open, it proved to be from her guardian, and ran as follows: "Reached London to-day. Coming down to Wayflete to fetch you to-morrow. Come 12.50; return 3.30."

It was an unlooked for but most welcome release.

CHAPTER III.

THE AWAKENING.

WHEN Barbara entered the drawing-room a few minutes later, her countenance bore no indication of the torture slowly smouldering within. She was taken in to dinner by a friend of Philip's. At first she did not notice that Alice and Mr. Selwyn were seated opposite. The painter started when he caught sight of Barbara. She met his glance with perfect indifference, a conventional smile playing for an instant round her lips. Then she turned a face of bright interest upon Jack Wilton, who was recounting some amusing experiences which had lately been his.

More than once, as he sat there, Gerard Selwyn forgot the presence of his betrothed. There were moments when he could scarcely withdraw his eyes from Barbara Dusent's sparkling *riante* countenance. What wonderful transformation scene had she passed through?

All at once he realized that his picture, fine as he knew it to be, presented but a faded resemblance of her regal young beauty.

Later on, when the men returned to the drawing-room, Philip appropriated the vacant chair beside his cousin, frustrating Selwyn's half-formed intention of taking possession of it.

Presently Alice seated herself at the piano, and proceeded to trill one of the sentimental songs of the day.

"I want you to sing something, now, Barbara," her aunt observed at its conclusion.

Contrary to Mrs. Ferrard's expectation, Barbara did not make the slightest hesitation: she rose slowly to her feet. Mrs. Ferrard

glanced at her in suddenly kindled admiration, as did several of her guests, as the girl moved in her stately fashion down the long room.

"Is there any song you particularly wish for, Aunt Ella?" Barbara asked.

"Yes. 'Robin Adair,' it is an especial favourite of mine." And Mrs. Ferrard plunged into a conversation with a lady near her, on the supremacy of old ballads.

Gerard Selwyn had never heard Barbara sing, consequently he anticipated the performance with no slight amount of curiosity.

The girl's lips set in an inexplicable fashion as she proceeded to play the opening bars of the old song. A sudden silence fell upon the room when the first rich, liquid notes floated out. There was something weirdly arresting in those wistful strains.

'What when the play was o'er,' she sang with exquisite intonation and indescribable pathos. "Yes," she thought bitterly, "'the play was o'er.'"

Gerard Selwyn noticed that there was not a sign of emotion on the singer's face at the conclusion of the song. Rather, it was coldly, proudly set, the mouth showing absolute firmness.

Barbara Dusent scored a success that night.

At last, when the guests were gathered in the studio, discussing Gerard Selwyn's pictures, the artist managed to get speech with Barbara.

"Miss Dusent," he said slowly, "do you know that to-night, for the first time, I am dissatisfied with the picture I painted of you?"

"Indeed?" she returned calmly, turning her flushed, lovely face towards him. "It appears to give immense satisfaction to those who are viewing it. But, Mr. Selwyn," with a clear little laugh, "please do not go into any artistic reasons respecting your discontent, that sort of thing is just a little incomprehensible to an outsider like myself, you know."

"I am afraid I have bored you frequently of late," he remarked, puzzled by her tone. "Still, you have borne most patiently with me."

"I am glad my manner has been so successful," she observed, a light in her eyes which he did not understand.

Selwyn gazed mutely at her, fascinated with her overwhelming beauty, which seemed to have been touched with the seal of perfection in one night. But Barbara appeared unconscious of his glance.

A mocking smile played round her lips as she watched the eager little throng gathered round "A Child of the Moors!"

Selwyn was keenly conscious that every other woman in the room looked insignificant beside this slight queenly girl in her softly falling silk draperies. He glanced from her to his betrothed. Had he made a mistake after all? he asked himself, a strange throbbing at his heart. Was his mock wooing a sentient thing in spite of himself?

At last she turned to him.

"What does it represent?" she asked enigmatically. "So many feet of canvas, so many cunningly mixed pigments—while in conjunction with the promptness of your eye, your heart, and your brain, you have been driven to resort to the methods of an actor. Truly a strange and wonderful combination. Until I knew you, Mr. Selwyn, I never imagined that art claimed so much from her exponents."

"I hope you will have an opportunity of witnessing the success of the labours which you have so admirably summed up," he said in stiff annoyance.

"I am afraid that pleasure will be denied me, so it is well I have profited by my lessons," she returned, a faint note of amusement in her voice. "I am leaving Wayflete to-morrow."

"But you are coming back again," quickly.

"Oh no!" with a decisive little gesture. "Aunt Ella wishes me to do so, I know. But you see Harborough is my home. By the way, as you are spending the morning at Bexwood, I think I had better say good-bye to you now; probably it will be my last opportunity. I really ought not to stay here any longer, as I have still to give orders about my packing."

She put out her hand and allowed her fingers to rest for an instant lightly in his; her eyes shone with a baffling unfathomable light, his with an expression of startled awakening. The next moment she had passed from his sight. Gerard Selwyn realised too late the value of that which he had lightly won and lightly flung away.

A year later, before the artistic world had ceased to ring with the praises of Gerard Selwyn's famous masterpiece, its inspirer was listening to the tale of another wooing on the breezy heights of Harborough. And hearing it, Barbara Dusent let the lingering remembrance of Gerard Selwyn's treachery fall away from her for ever.

One of Life's Tragedies.

By M. N. H.

HE was a curate and she the daughter of a retired colonel. They lived in a small seaside watering place, which was gay enough in summer with all the visitors who used to bring their children there to get rest and fresh strength, before returning to home and lessons for the long winter. But when the visitors had gone, the only diversion for Slapton in general—for here and there private individuals might get up a little amusement among themselves—the only diversion for Slapton as a community was the advent of a Father Jerome or a Sequah.

The advent of the latter affected the curate little or not at all, since at that time he was daily expecting to be called to an East End parish. But the former event, if it did not affect him personally yet gave the old ladies and men of the place food for gossip, and his name figured as the all important topic of conversation for many a long day. For, the reader must know, Slapton is what is called Low Church, which means, as every one knows, that it had a wholesale abhorrence of anything in the way of form or ceremonial, and an undying hatred not unmingled with superstitious fear of Rome, or anything approaching Rome, in the cut of a coat or the wording of a prayer. Having grasped this, it may easily be imagined with what feelings the news of the Reverend Father's advent was received. At the afternoon teas, where eleven or twelve unfortunate girls were always assembled, to listen to the conversation of two or three middle aged women and sexagenarian men, it was discussed with great animation. Each had a worse tale than the other to tell of his Jesuitical methods of decoying young persons of both sexes into his convents and monasteries, of his profligacy, his cruelty, his shamelessness, and I know not what.

"And then you know dear Mrs.—" said one old lady to another, "the worst of it is that like all those Jesuits they say he is so nice looking, and has such fascinating manners. I should be afraid to go and hear him."

"Nonsense," interrupted another lady brusquely, she was the

retired Colonel's wife—Mrs. Withers—and the leading spirit among this little clique—"I'm sure he's just an oily looking priest. He wouldn't fascinate me, I know, and if I don't go to hear him it is not because I am afraid, but that I entirely disapprove of him."

Some of the young ladies with difficulty restrained the expression of their feelings at this unqualified condemnation, for they possessed in their inmost hearts a sneaking regard for the Father and his doctrines, and would have been very High Church indeed had such a thing been possible in Slapton. One or two of them had even thought of going into convents in their green salad days, and were naturally angry at being damned by inference. None of them spoke however, for young ladies in Slapton were well brought up and domestic. They could sew, and had some knowledge of the culinary art, but never dreamed of interfering in the conversation of their elders; instead they generally clustered into a corner and had a conversation on their own account. But to-day it seemed to flag, and they consequently listened to what was passing around them. All were very glad when Mrs. Withers proposed an adjournment to the tennis lawn, where they could discuss their parents' narrowmindedness to their heart's content, without fear of being overheard.

The conversation continued just as briskly in their absence, without showing any signs of abatement.

"I shall go to hear him from curiosity," Mrs. Chalmers remarked, "it can do no harm."

"Well I should think it wrong even to appear to countenance it," replied her vis-à-vis.

At this juncture the door was thrown open and the Curate was announced. The usual hush followed as he shook hands with each in a nervous manner.

"Perhaps you will rather go into the garden," Mrs. Withers suggested after a somewhat embarrassing pause. "There is tennis going on, and the young people will be glad for you to join them."

"Thank you," ejaculated the young man, feeling immensely relieved, "but I come to see your husband about some, about some—some churchwarden's business—in fact."

"My husband is out at present but he won't be long, and I'll send him to you directly he comes in," the Colonel's wife replied. So the Curate went to the garden, and Margaret's friends, who all had an

inkling of the state of affairs, contrived that she should play with the Curate, and both were supremely happy. About a week later a bombshell was thrown into the little clique. The Curate had actually been to hear Father Jerome.

Now that the laity should go out of curiosity, or in order to be able to speak more authoritatively against his Romish doctrines, was quite right and natural—but a clergyman of the Church of England! Such a thing was unheard of, and came as a shock to one and all. Slapton could never have appreciated the attitude of the clergyman, who, on being confronted by an indignant parishioner at the Grand Prix, remarked that he intended on the following Sunday to address his congregation on the evils of race meetings, and had come to gain information and experience.

Margaret Withers rather respected the Curate for going. It showed toleration and a willingness to hear both sides of the question she thought, so he rose one step in her estimation, and sank correspondingly in that of the older members of the parish without exception. She knew she respected him for going, and yet—well Margaret wished he hadn't just gone then—for only two or three days before she had promised to marry him, and, knowing Slapton, a dreary misgiving entered her mind that her parents, who were not only in Slapton, but of it, would never give their consent.

They had agreed not to mention their engagement until the Curate could find out whether he had any prospect of getting a curacy in the East End, to which he was looking with covetous eyes. For he was burning with the restless ardour and impatience of youth, this unattractive nervous young man, and Slapton bored him. He hated its afternoon teas, its narrowness, its intense respectability and general mediocrity, so that when an East End vicar wrote to the Slapton vicar, asking him if he could tell him of a hardworking young man who wanted an East End curacy, and the Slapton vicar suggested to the Curate that he was the very person for it, he did not attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

He hoped that everything would be settled in a few days, but meantime it was very hard for her to remain quiet and hear him abused without being able to say anything. On this particular day her blood rose to boiling point, and she had to leave the room, as she could not trust herself to stay quietly in it. Out of the house, through the garden and down the straight road, bordered by its

detached villa residences, she wandered, feeling inclined to shake her fist at each one as she passed and say "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you. You are all self-righteous and narrow minded and slow, and he is worth all of you put together." Her frame of mind was anything but ladylike and Slapton would scarcely have approved, but gradually as she walked the air seemed to calm her, and after a few minutes she saw nothing but the comic side of the situation.

It was just then, when with a bright smile on her face she was turning a corner, that she ran against the Curate. "You have good news," she asked.

"Yes, I was just wondering when I should see you to tell you," he answered. "Everything seems satisfactory, and I am to go up to town to see the Vicar the day after to-morrow, and then," interrogatively, "we must begin work as soon as possible. Don't you think so?"

"Whenever you like," she said.

And so they settled and talked over their plans, as though there were but two in the world, and she assented to his confident propositions with apparently equal confidence and hope, for she shrank from telling him what Slapton was saying of him, and of the difficulties she feared in consequence. It would be the first rebuff to his enthusiasm, and hers she determined should not be the hand to administer it. He must know all about it in a few days at the latest, but let him learn it from others.

Common sense might urge that it would lose half its power if he heard it from her lips, but she too had been enthusiastic and hated common sense. For Slapton and common sense between them, had conspired to deaden her aspirations, and their indirect instruments had been they of her own household.

So she said nothing, and when they parted, they had agreed not to mention their engagement until the Curate came back. But alas, for the best laid plans of women and men! She was unable to keep her engagement a secret until the Curate's return, or even to break the news discreetly. For two days after the last gathering there was yet another tea-party, and again the whole topic of conversation was the Curate. Someone had discovered that in addition to all his other enormities, the Curate had had a Roman Catholic priest to lunch with him. Father Ignatius was bad—but this!

"He is a wolf in sheep's clothing, my dear," said one old lady, "a

Jesuit in disguise to spy out the land, I'm sure. I was always doubtful of your clean shaven men."

"I think the Vicar ought to be spoken to and told to get rid of him," remarked Miss Guppy. "He is something worse than a Jesuit I can tell you, from facts which have come to my knowledge."

"You don't say so," ejaculated Mrs. Withers.

"Yes, really. I hear he has been engaged dozens of times. Miss Jones, you know, only left here because of Dora. He was engaged to her for weeks, and then jilted her, the poor girl couldn't stay; and then hardly was that engagement broken off when he wrote and proposed to that Miss Jackson, whom he had only met twice, simply because he heard she had money."

"Oh! that is going a little too far," said one old gentleman.

"No, I assure you it is only too true," replied the lady.

"I can quite believe it after his escapade with Miss Smith," Mrs. Chalmers remarked.

"Why, what was that?"

"Oh, don't you remember that time they both went up to London by the same train. He said he was going to see a dying uncle, and she went up for shopping. Curiously enough they both missed the last train, and came back together the next day, and I heard that they had been seen together at Madame Tussaud's and at the theatre. It *was* queer."

Margaret could stand this no longer; even her lady-like bringing up stood her in no stead.

"Oh, how can people manufacture such lies!" she exclaimed hotly. "It is not true, not one word of it."

The ladies and old gentlemen looked at each other.

"My dear Margaret," her mother exclaimed.

"Yes," she said "it is all false from beginning to end. Mr. Meadows is engaged to me, and he has never been engaged to anyone else, and the Roman Catholic priest is his cousin, and Slapton is a nasty, spiteful, mischief-making place," and she left the room abruptly. And so an even larger bombshell was thrown into the camp.

They were married about a month after, a perfectly quiet wedding, underhand, and scarcely legal, Slapton said. The old Vicar married them, but none of her people were present. They absolutely refused their consent, and, in the Curate's presence, gave her the choice between him or them. She hesitated for a moment, and then what

she saw in the Curate's face made her cross the room and take her place by his side.

"So be it," said her father.

"So be it," echoed the Curate, and they went out together.

For two years they strove and worked with no news or kind message from her home, and at the end of that time the Curate died, a victim to typhoid fever, against which a constitution enfeebled by constant overwork, had been unable to fight.

Then her mother came to her, and tried to take her home to her own people, but she refused.

"No mother," she said, "I cannot go back among people who think and speak of him as they do in Slapton. I must finish the work he began."

Her mother begged, prayed, implored, but to no purpose, and she went home alone. She longed to comfort her child, but as she afterwards told her husband, Margaret did not seem to feel anything except the need of work, more work. Before a year was over she had followed the Curate. Slapton seemed to see in it divine judgment, the penalty of youthful folly, and the sign of celestial displeasure. The case is quoted at tea-parties, as a warning to any youthful impetuosity that may chance to rise above the clatter of the tea-cups.

"Had they been sensible and taken the advice of their elders and waited, they might both be alive now," was frequently remarked.

But they were young, and didn't want to wait, and Slapton bored them.

Notices of New Books.

ONE of the results of Dr. Nansen's Arctic Explorations in the *Fram* is the publication by Messrs. Constable of two deeply interesting volumes. Perhaps it is with a feeling of just pride that Nansen has given his book the title of "FARTHEST NORTH," for the latitude his expedition reached on the 8th April, 1895, was $86^{\circ} 14''$, which beats the record of northern voyaging by about 200 miles, and in all probability will continue to do so for at least some time to come. Unfortunately, histories of such voyages too often teem with tragic results, and it is almost with a feeling of dread that we venture to read them, fearing to meet with the inevitable series of appalling disasters and the terrible climax of death. Such an eventuality gives us pause while we count the cost of sacrifice. We feel then that those Arctic experiences and the knowledge they bring with them have been far too dearly bought; but Dr. Nansen's exploits are, on the whole, of a pleasant kind. Chapter succeeds chapter with bright narratives of exciting adventure and of perils met and overcome. Dangers and vicissitudes, hardships and suffering, there are in plenty; these, however, are the natural outcome of such undertakings, they help to give zest to, and help to make up the charm of any book of adventurous travel. No deaths, it is pleasurable to say, are recorded here, and indeed we hardly read of any case of serious sickness or untoward accident. Bravery and pluck, energy and perseverance have combined to bring to a successful issue this hazardous venture, and we are right glad to welcome in our midst the gallant leader of the brave little crew who shared his fortunes on board the *Fram*.

To be enjoyed, "FARTHEST NORTH" must be read from beginning to end. We hope that in a not far distant time Messrs. Constable will be able to put it within the reach of the million to be the fortunate possessors of so delightful a record, and one which aptly illustrates the good old proverb, "Success comes not by wishing, but hard work bravely done."

Mr. Oliphant Smeaton's sketch of the "LIFE OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT," forms the latest addition to the "Famous Scots" series (Messrs. Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier). This is the second volume Mr. Smeaton contributes. He has dealt with the subject in the just and appreciative manner which it deserves. We are particularly in-

terested in the concluding chapters, containing, as they do, in concise form, a critical judgment, which is extremely interesting. Mr. Smeaton is of opinion that the ground for a comparison between Smollett, Fielding and Richardson do not exist, as they worked on totally different lines. That anyone will refuse to give Smollett a front rank as a novelist he does not think conceivable; but his place as a writer in the poetic and dramatic branches of British literature cannot be expected to stand so high.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS, by Percy Fendall and Fox Russell. This story, published by Smith Elder and Co., 1897, possesses a certain amount of power and interest, but is unfortunately spoilt by the disconnected style; a fault which is often found in a book written by more than one author, is here at times very obvious. The characters, especially those of the hero and heroine, are well sketched, and the interest increases as the story approaches the end, but Mr. Fendall and Mr. Russell have attempted too difficult a task in essaying a joint novel.

C. H. R.

The Drama.

Two Little Vagabonds at the Princess's Theatre, by George Sims and Arthur Shirley, is an excellent melodrama. The plot has the merit of originality, as the opening scene of the father, deliberately consigning his little son to a chance mendicant (as an act of revenge for his wife's supposed infidelity) leads one to expect. The strenuous efforts of the reconciled parents to discover the whereabouts of the abandoned child, and the subsequent stratagem resorted to by those to whom the irate parent committed him, all lend themselves to a clever drama. The *Two Little Vagabonds* maintain their rôles with marked ability, and the piece may be heartily commended.

Admirers of Nelson are now offered a choice of plays, both having the great Commander for central figure; but in *Nelson's Enchantress* at the Avenue, we fail to find the man whose memory is so endeared to English men and women. Of course those who appreciate good acting, apart from the intrinsic merit of the piece, will be well satisfied with a play where Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Mr. Forbes Robertson act conjointly; though in spite of this attraction at the Avenue, the hero as personified at the Olympic in Mr. Robert Buchanan's play will, no doubt, attract a great many more to whom the sentimental Nelson at the Avenue is too unreal a figure.

M. W.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MAY, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DAY WITH THE GUNS.

LADY MALVERN emerged from her retirement at half-past twelve, and asked immediately for Lady Falconer. This was a sign of special favour, for the arrangements for the day were announced on a card in the hall, and no further instructions were considered necessary. Those who wished to lunch with the sportsmen were expected to be in the hall at the hour named, and it was known to all her intimates that the Marchioness waited for nobody. The others might come after her at any hour they pleased. She did not fidget herself about them in the least. There were the carriages to convey them wherever they wished to go; and if they preferred to stay at home they would find an excellent luncheon prepared for them, in the smaller dining-room.

On this occasion she started alone with Beatrice in a victoria, and deluged her with a flood of worldly advice on the way. She listened with profound attention, and with much inward amusement, wondering what her father would think of such maxims as “Never express an opinion that is likely to be unpopular,” or, “Be as good as you like, but never seem too easily shocked by other people.” Lady Malvern really wished to do her niece a good turn, and if it had been Beatrice's desire to develop into a thorough woman of the world, she could not have had a better instructress.

When they reached the appointed rendezvous they found the shooting-party already assembled with rampant appetites. Lady

Malvern went at once to inspect the game and to speak to the head keeper. The bag was pronounced pretty fair, considering the late start, and all seemed in the highest spirits. Major Mortimer had been taken once more into favour by the astute little beauty, because she found that the other men were afraid of undertaking her. She claimed to have brought down three birds with her own dainty gun, and the Major was far too considerate to contradict her. Vere Haughton—a fashionable woman whom men always admired, whilst her own sex dubbed her unhesitatingly “plain”—said nothing about her exploits; but sat apart under a hedge talking to Sir Henry Brown as he lay on the grass at her feet smoking a huge cheroot. The keepers, one and all, hated feminine guns, and Grierson—the “head boss”—was never tired of warning her ladyship that some day there would be a terrible accident if petticoats were allowed to “interlope” where they had no business.

Beatrice, as she looked at the heated faces, the untidy hair, and the masculine attire of the feminine shooters, felt quite ashamed of her own irreproachable appearance, and tasteful frock of brown cloth, with pink silk blouse.

She was mentally deciding that she was quite “out of it,” when up came Townshend-Rivers—a great authority on social matters—whose approval was considered a *cachet* in itself. He told her that she was a positive refreshment to faded eyes. “We’ve seen all that sort of thing again and again,” with a depreciatory wave of his hand towards the two sportswomen. “Women have been trying to ape men for the last fifty years—the dodge is as old as our grandfathers, but the type of the frankly feminine English girl, has died out, and you must be its revival. Come and be fed,” leading the way to the luncheon-table which was spread under the boughs of a gigantic chestnut, “or you may die out as well, and then our last hope will be gone. A glass of champagne for Lady Falconer.”

“You won’t get it,” Lady Malvern said, with a twinkle in her eye—“I found that ‘the Boy’ interfered with straight shooting, so I stopped the supply.”

“Glad to hear it,” remarked Major Mortimer. “Our own lives will be safer, but it’s rough on the birds.”

“D—the birds,” muttered Falconer in an undertone; “they are bred for our amusement.”

“Yes,” murmured Townshend-Rivers, who had overheard his

solitary contribution to the conversation, "the greater naturally prey on the less—but this does not always end in the survival of the fittest."

"Not when I'm at the end of the gun, and a pheasant at the other?"

Rivers looked him over coolly, and shook his head. "No, you wouldn't be so blatantly conceited as to compare yourself with a cock-pheasant?"

Falconer said nothing, but seemed busily engaged with his luncheon—which was more interesting to him than any "abstract questions." Rivers turned to the one who seemed to him the incomparably "better half," and entered into a discussion as to whether, from a moral point of view, it were not better to be the "destroyed" rather than the "destroyer," but Beatrice ranged herself with vivacity on the other side. She was too full of life and youth to contemplate annihilation with anything but revulsion, and she had a warm supporter in her hostess, who leant forward and said with decision—"I don't care a farthing for the moral of it, but I say frankly that I would rather destroy anything—from a pug dog to Westminster Abbey—than be destroyed myself."

"Ditto," said Falconer readily, for this was a sentiment he could heartily appreciate. Before his wife's broader vision spread a picture of the beautiful grey stone pile—the shrine of England's most hallowed memories—with every pointed arch and stately tower wreathed in smoke and flame—whilst across the wide space of the Broad Sanctuary skipped and hobbled an old woman with a grin of triumph on her withered face.

"Not the dear Old Abbey!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"Yes, my dear, even the dear old Abbey," Lady Malvern replied with a decided nod. "One old woman may seem a poor thing in the balance, but she's more than all the Abbeys in the world to me."

"And to us all," put in Major Mortimer with a low bow. "In fact I greatly prefer myself to Windsor Castle; and if it came to one chance offered to either of us, I should take that chance, and let the castle shift for itself."

"I bet you would," drawled Townshend-Rivers, "because you are all pitting yourselves against stones and mortar, but is there one of us who would give up his own life to keep another's intact? That is the question."

"Pass the claret, please—you choose such dry subjects," muttered Sir Henry.

"I suppose if a woman weren't too ugly or too heavy I should have to plunge into the fire to pull her out," Mortimer remarked with his eye-brows up, as if he would not relish the prospect—"but I don't want it to happen."

"I shouldn't like to be the woman," Lady Crosby asserted, though she conjured up a romantic vision of a golden head resting on a man's square shoulder, and two forms slipping down a fire-escape in frantic haste.

"In the case of a wreck, and only one place left in the boats—hanged if I shouldn't take that place," Falconer said with startling veracity.

A crimson wave rushed over his wife's face. "How can you say such a thing?" she asked indignantly. "You know you wouldn't."

"I know I should," he said doggedly, and everybody believed him. "There's a lot of sentimental rubbish talked about women. A sailor with iron muscles and a good amount of common sense, is expected to make way for any hysterical idiot of a girl, who will be a burden to everyone she comes near, if she gets to shore. I don't see it, myself."

Beatrice kept silence, but her red lips were tightly compressed, and her eyes flashed angrily. Why did Falconer make himself out such a cold-blooded egotist?—the very type of man she most detested.

"There's something in what you say," Rivers remarked quietly, "only you could not have an examination of character, when the waves were wanting to swallow you, and the woman might be an angel—and the man—a beast."

"Very likely," said Lady Malvern, drily, "There are a great many beasts about beside those in the Zoo."

"Too many women anyhow," muttered Falconer, "and not an angel amongst them."

"You would not know what to make of her if there were," snapped his aunt. "Now go on with your shooting. Grierson's growing impatient, and so am I. Come, Beatrice. Let us try and get into more elevating society—your husband's sentiments are too frankly revolting."

The Marchioness having decided that she ought to go home in

order to receive a fresh contingent of guests who were to arrive that afternoon, finally drove in quite a contrary direction. As they careered over the country, past ploughed fields where the ruddy earth was freshly turned, over hills whose slopes were still thickly covered with verdure, with glimpses of wide valleys, and here and there the silver Avon gleaming white between its willowed banks, Beatrice had but little time for reflection. As the broad river went on without stopping through busy towns and sleepy villages, and long tracts of solitude and silence, so the Marchioness's tongue went on without a halt till the victoria stopped within the stately portico, which seemed such an anachronism in connection with the irregular architecture of Ethelred Hall.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXTRA MAN.

BEATRICE's high spirits deserted her that evening, and she went down to dinner with an expression that would have suited far more tragic circumstances. Her husband was not ready, so she hurried down to the drawing-room in hopes of having a few moments to herself; but as she strolled up to the elaborately carved fire-place, and stretched her hands to the genial blaze of the pine-logs, somebody came in by another door, and she looked round with a feeling of annoyance at being disturbed. The next moment her face lighted up, and she almost ran across the square of pile carpet to meet Hugh Pemberton. "Oh here you are! Why didn't you come before?" she asked, as she shook hands enthusiastically.

Then she sat down on a sofa with the fire-light playing on her animated face, and plunged into a talk about all the dear people at home. She had scarcely realised how much she had longed for them till one appeared who had seen them only the day before, and knew all their ways—most of their friends—and many of their occupations. The Bishop was now established at St. Christopher's, and was hoping for his daughter's arrival as he intended to break out into proper episcopal hospitality before the beginning of Advent. Aunt Judith sent word that she would not feel at home in the palace until Beatrice was inhabiting one of the many bed-rooms.

"Dear old thing!" she cried with a tremble about the corners of

her pretty mouth. "There never was anyone in the whole world so good and sweet as Aunt Judy."

Meanwhile the room had gradually filled, and many curious glances were thrown towards the beautiful girl in the picturesque gown of brown tawny velvet and apricot bengaline, who seemed entirely engrossed by the soldierly-looking man who stood before her. There were many strangers who were anxious to know who she was, and as Townshend-Rivers was supposed to be a walking "Who's-who," he was attacked on every side.

"Who's the girl in the tiger-colouring who has no eyes for anybody but that fair-haired boy?"

"Lady Falconer."

"And the boy—that particularly fortunate boy?" with a touch of acrimony.

"Can't for the life of me remember." Rivers could not find it in him to say he didn't know. "Some cousin, from the frankness of the interest displayed—or that most dangerous hanger-on—friend of my baby-hood."

Rivers chuckled as he made the remark, but the chuckle died away into sudden gravity as he found Falconer's massive form standing behind him. In spite of his affected cynicism, he was a thoroughly good-natured man, and he was vexed with himself at the time because he was afraid that he had done Beatrice a bad turn.

A disreputable old man, whose wealth covered as many sins as the cloak of charity, was told off to take in Lady Falconer. She swept past her husband with her head held high, and the next instant turned to the Millionaire with her brightest smile. The knowledge that she had a dear old friend under the same roof with her had sent up her spirits with a bound. She resolutely kept her resentment against her husband in the back ground, and let herself drift with the flow of cheerfulness that surrounded her.

The Millionaire wore a perfectly made wig of thick brown hair, a set of teeth that had a few artful defects introduced here and there, which were the perfection of art, a carefully prepared complexion, and looked like a man in the prime of life, if the lamps were adequately shaded. Beatrice knew nothing about him except that he bore a grand old name which had figured on the pages of English History. His past was like a book on a dusty shelf, his present was close under her eyes in its smart binding and gilded leaves, and looked

attractive. He had a store of witty sayings and short pithy anecdotes, which he brought out in the most prodigal manner, when he found her an appreciative listener, instead of a dressed-up doll—only intent on attracting his admiration. He had rarely come across a girl who suited his taste so exactly. She was pretty enough for anything, with a throat like a Hebe's, a skin like the inside leaf of a white rose, a pair of eyes, deep and dark and fathomless as any that ever shone out of one of Long's canvasses—and yet sparkling as if stolen from some gipsy-face of Murillo's; and together with all this, which was enough for any girl, she was absolutely intelligent, though not advanced—thank Heaven! Where had that big lout of a man, Falconer, picked up this prize? He must ask Rivers. It was like matching a thunder-cloud and a sun-beam. Somebody ought to have interfered.

Hugh, watching Beatrice in the pauses of a brisk conversation carried on by Millie Crosby, wondered why her face had worn such a sad expression when he first caught sight of it in the drawing-room before dinner. Now she looked as happy as any other girl, with her old mischievous sparkle in her eyes, and an oft-recurring smile on her lips. She had taken to the part of a "grande dame," he thought, very kindly, and the marriage would probably turn out better than his uncle prophesied. He never guessed that her bright spirits were due to the stimulus given to them by his own arrival, and so abandoned himself to a sort of gentle flirtation with the ever-ready Millie with an undejected mind. In spite of Falconer's disparaging verdict, there was nothing of the prig about him. He did not look upon right and wrong as convertible terms, or make a point of falling in love with his neighbour's wife, or regard pleasure as the one aim and object of existence, neither did he forswear it. He was anxious to get his fair share of enjoyment out of life, but he was devoted to his profession, and rarely anxious to shirk work which might lead to his future advancement. He was capable of going to Church on Sunday without scoffing at those who elected to stay at home, and he was not ashamed of attempting in some sort of fashion to do his duty to God and his neighbour, though his comrades might laugh at him, in the pride of their cheap scepticism. With all this he was a thorough man, able to hold his own in whatever society he found himself, and Beatrice saw with keen delight that he made his way at once with most of the people in the house.

No one treated him to that cool stare with which Society tries to quell an aggressive outsider. They acknowledged him to be as fit to be one of themselves, when they saw that he was a capital shot at the *grande battue* held on the Saturday: they fraternized over golf, about which he was nearly as crazy as anyone else; and Lady Malvern herself became one of his staunchest champions when she had taken him the round of her stables, and discovered that he was almost as good a judge of horseflesh as she was herself.

As the ladies were going upstairs to bed one night, Mrs. Haughton drew close to Lady Falconer, and said in a low voice: "A word of warning before I go away—Millie means to annex your friend."

Beatrice laughed, and said cheerfully, "I am glad that she appreciates him."

Vere stared, unable to understand the situation. "I shouldn't allow it if I were you."

"Why not? Hugh is quite able to take care of himself. She won't break his heart."

"But he belongs to you."

"Yes, in a way. He is one of my oldest friends—the nearest imitation of a brother."

"Ah—now I can understand you—" smiling as if reassured as to Lady Falconer's being made of the same stuff as herself. "You feel so sure of him that you defy Millie to do her worst."

"Exactly," with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes—"I am only sorry for the Major."

"I wish I could stay on to see the fun," Vere said. "Do send me a scribble—with all the exciting details. I should love to hear them."

With a friendly kiss, they parted—and Beatrice went slowly down the corridor to her own room, reflecting that life at Ethelred Hall was becoming every day more and more like a column in a Society paper.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNPLEASANT STORY.

It was a very cheerful gathering at Ethelred Hall, but in spite of all the laughter and gaiety, Beatrice felt that a storm-cloud was hanging

over her head and growing in substance as the days flew by. Her husband seemed to be changing as quickly as the tints of the foliage in Autumn. He used to laugh at her smallest jokes as if they were witticisms of the most superior order; but her attempts at fun absolutely withered away under the effect of his portentous gravity. He had been given to repeated osculatory demonstrations of affection, but now she rarely got more from him than a tolerably friendly nod. Every now and then a fear crossed her mind that they were actually slipping apart like two boats too loosely tied together; but she would tell herself that she was growing fanciful, and cast the thought behind her like a broken horse-shoe.

It was one of those bright days in mid-November which sometimes come to remind us that the sun has not forgotten to shine although he has chosen to hide himself lately in a mantle of fog, so Lady Malvern made up her mind to pay a distant call; and as she hated a long lonely drive she begged Beatrice to forswear a projected game of golf and bear her company. Beatrice had often given up some secretly planned pleasure on finding that Aunt Judith was going out in the carriage, so she had grown into the uncommon habit of self-sacrifice, and submitted without giving herself the aspect of a martyr.

Millie Crosby exclaimed, "What a fearful shame!" but she was inwardly pleased at the thought that she would be able to appropriate Captain Pemberton without any interference from his original owner. Hugh, on the contrary, looked frankly disappointed, whilst Lord Falconer listened to the discussion as if he had not the slightest concern in it, and sauntered away to the stables before the matter was finally settled.

Townshend-Rivers put the ladies into the victoria, and looked surprised when the Countess said "Percy's Court" to the powdered-haired footman.

"Do you know that the old lady has friends staying there?" he asked rather faster than usual, just as they were driving off.

"Yes—yes," she rejoined impatiently for she hated to be thwarted in anything, however unimportant, "I don't suppose they will bite us."

The horses—a high-couraged, perfectly matched pair of thoroughbred bays—sprang forward, and whisked the light carriage at a rapid pace down the avenue as if they were in as great a hurry as their mistress.

Townshend-Rivers shook his head doubtfully, but as it was useless to utter remonstrances which could not be heard, he only remarked to himself, "A pretty kettle of fish!" and went to fetch his golf things.

"What a fussy man he is!" Lady Malvern exclaimed, although it was the last epithet that anyone else would have applied to him. "As if we were schoolgirls, to be frightened at visitors."

"He must have had some motive. I wonder what it was" rejoined her niece, whose judgment had not been clouded by irritation.

"Pure love of interference. I did not consult him about my drive, so he wished to put a spoke in our wheel," drawing her sables closer round her thin little body.

They drove on down a road which appeared to be interminable, through the flattest, most uninteresting scenery, which seemed as if it could not possibly belong to Warwickshire. Suddenly they began to descend a hill, and as a glorious prospect broke before them Beatrice discovered that they had been on an upland several thousand feet above the level of the valley.

Percy's Court nestled at the foot of the hills like a huge grey bird in a nest of trees. The trees—mostly grand old birches—opened out, and left a broad lawn in front of the windows, giant deodars made a screen as of dark green laces on the one side, whilst weeping willows with drooping branches that kissed the soft green turf on the other, lent a softening touch to the picture.

As Beatrice followed her aunt down a stone colonnade containing a winter-garden, the silence was so intense that she felt as if she were entering the cloister of a cathedral. The nodding yellow plume in Lady Malvern's bonnet seemed grotesquely out of place, and when they emerged into a hall with softest carpets under foot, but vaulted arches overhead, she expected to hear the solemn tones of an organ pealing forth a message of holiness. The light was very dim, and the hall seemed to go off into mysterious corners. As she threw a hasty glance round, she met the gaze of a pair of eyes which were fixed upon her with an intensity of feeling, whether of surprise or admiration she could not guess—which made her stop against her will. Then she discovered that a young man was lying on a sofa, covered with tiger-skin rugs. On his lap were some of the paraphernalia connected with painting, but the spray of taxonia which he had evidently been trying to depict after a bold style of

his own on the canvass, had slipped from the corner of the screen on which it had been hung, and was now lying out of his reach on the floor. She could see by one glance at his face that he was incapable of movement; it was therefore quite impossible for her to pass on without coming to his assistance.

Moving quickly across to where he was lying, she picked up the spray with an easy grace that his artist eye fully appreciated, and turned with a smile to ask if that would do, as she arranged it carefully in what she fancied was its original position.

"Excellently," he said with the fervent gratitude of the helpless for ready assistance, "A thousand thanks." His thin face—which had no beauty except what was given it by the patient spirit within—flushed to the roots of his fair hair.

"Beatrice!" came from near the door in her aunt's sternest tone, and she had to hurry away without another word.

Lady Malvern gave her a look which was angry because she was agitated, and she hated to be upset, but she had to master her displeasure as their names had already been announced, and a charming old lady was advancing to meet them. Beatrice looked eagerly round the large room, whose walls were tinted with the softest grey of a dove's wings, and hung with pictures which had once been on the line at Burlington House. She was looking for the objectionable people against whom Mr. Townshend-Rivers had tried to warn them, but she could see nothing eccentric in the two elderly ladies sitting with Mrs. Percival—one with a fair patient face which had some resemblance to that of the young man in the hall, the other a prosaic, severe old maid with a mole on the very tip of her quaint nose, who was knitting as if for her life.

Lady Malvern introduced Beatrice simply as "My niece" to Mrs. Percival and to no one else. As she was generally very careful about her social duties, Beatrice was rather surprised. A conversation began immediately between the three other ladies, and the old maid, whom Mrs. Percival had addressed as Sophy, plunged at once into talk, with the one who was rather left on her hands. Presently Mrs. Percival turned to Beatrice and asked her if she would care to see the flowers in the conservatory, and begged Miss Wingfield to take "Lady Malvern's niece" and show her everything.

Miss Wingfield rose, knitting in hand, and led the way through a side-door into a glass house with a bell-shaped roof which was filled

with plants of great beauty, arranged with artistic skill. Large trails of taxonia hung down in festoons and reminded Beatrice at once of the invalid. Brimful of interest, she asked eagerly what had happened to him—was it an accident or a case of incurable disease?

Miss Wingfield actually stopped her knitting as she said in surprise, "Did you never hear of Gerald de Winton? It's a very very sad story. Shall we sit down here whilst I tell it you?" pointing to a rustic seat half hidden amongst the shrubs.

Beatrice, dressed in the latest fashion, looked a striking contrast to the little plain spinster, as she sat facing her with a tender interest in her large dark eyes, her hands idly crossed on her lap, while Miss Wingfield was habited in a tight green serge with no ornamentation to conceal the meagreness of her figure, and her active little fingers were as busy as her tongue.

"Gerald de Winton was staying in a famous castle in Yorkshire with a large party of young people. Amongst the girls there was a very pretty golden-haired flirt named Rose Carlyle, whom Gerald absolutely worshipped. All went well until another man arrived from abroad, a great big masterful fellow, who seemed to captivate Rose at once. The girl was a flirt, as I told you," Miss Wingfield went on with a sudden quaver in her voice, "but I don't think she could help herself this time. The man seems to have had a mysterious influence over her—next door to hypnotism. She gave him the dances she had actually promised to the other poor boy; she met him in the flower-garden, at the very hour she had fixed to be with Gerald in the kitchen-garden under the old pear-tree; and altogether, she behaved as if she were not mistress of her own actions. Of course the two quarrelled about her all day, till one night, Gerald found that he could stand it no longer. He determined that it should be settled one way or the other before he went to bed, and so it was, poor-fellow—settled for life as far as he was concerned."

"The other man was accepted?" Beatrice asked eagerly, with an intense interest that surprised herself.

"No—not that," with a dolorous shake of her head. "When the men left the smoking-room, Gerald did a most unwise thing, he followed this man to his own room which was down at the end of a corridor. What passed we don't quite know, but I believe Gerald asked him if he were serious in his attentions to poor Rose, and if

he meant to marry her. Perhaps he had no right to ask, but he was half crazy at the time with the uncertainty. The other flew into a violent passion. He used the most horrible language. Joe Somers who was in the next room heard him, and began to be uneasy about Gerald's safety. At last, as the noise increased, he thought it best to interfere. He went to the man's door, and opened it. The window was open—the furniture knocked over or pushed out of place, the whole room looked as if a fearful struggle had taken place, but Gerald was nowhere to be seen.

"'What have you done with de Winton?' Joe asked at once.

"The man who was standing in the middle of the room with folded arms turned round, and Joe told us afterwards that his face looked like a fiend's. 'I've put him outside the window,' he said fiercely, 'and I'll do the same to you if you bother me.'

"'Good God—you must have murdered him!' Joe cried, and without waiting for anything more, he rushed downstairs to see if the poor boy was alive or dead. They thought he was dead at first, but clever doctors brought him round, and mended all his broken bones—but his spine received some injury, and he will always be helpless as a baby till God takes him to himself," she said in a choked voice.

"But the wretch who did it—what was his name?" Beatrice asked, quivering all over with fierce indignation.

"We never mention it, by Gerald's express desire; from the first, he insisted on the affair being hushed up. He said that the man was mad with passion, and did not realise what he was doing. Oh the boy is a saint—a positive saint," she exclaimed excitedly, and dropped one of her needles on the tessellated floor to the great detriment of her work. "To think of him with every hope blasted—he wanted to go into Holy Orders—he had always set his heart on it—but he had to give that up as well as everything else! Rose, poor child, half wild with pity and penitence would have married him gladly—but he would not let her be burdened by a cripple. It broke his heart, but he was quite firm, and with all his gentleness, when he has once made up his mind as to the right or wrong of anything—nothing will move him."

"But the wretch who hurt him, what has he done to show his remorse? He ought to have devoted his life to Mr. de Winton."

"Done? Absolutely nothing; he left the Castle that night, although there was no train at that hour to carry him away either

North or South. There was no rest for anyone else in the house—no one could go to bed until he knew whether Gerald would live or die, for he was a general favourite, and all liked him. But the man who had injured him stole away like the coward that he is, and from that day to this he has never sent him one word of regret for having absolutely ruined his life."

"Oh, I should like to meet him, and tell him exactly what I think of him," Beatrice exclaimed with a long breath. "He is the meanest scoundrel I ever heard of. There's my aunt," jumping up, "I mustn't keep her waiting or I shall catch it. Thank you so much for your story, I shall never forget it." And she never did.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIED FOR LIFE.

ON the way home, Beatrice paid little attention to Lady Malvern's voluble talk, and absolutely broke in upon it on one occasion to ask where Mr. De Winton lived.

The remark was not received kindly. With a frown, the old lady said snappishly, "In London. What is it to you?"

"Only this—I should so like to do something for him—I could go and cheer him up, and if he is fond of music, he might care to hear me sing. Don't you think it might be managed?"

"Certainly not," was the unpromising answer. "Just you leave him alone—and don't interrupt me again. As I was saying—" she plunged again into a narrative connected with a famous racer, and Beatrice, with one look of surprise at her aunt's flushed face, subsided into the position of an uninterested listener. She did not know why, but certainly the visit to Percy's Court had not been a success as far as Lady Malvern was concerned, for her equanimity had been so disturbed that she seemed as if she could not recover it. Immediately on her return she asked for Mr. Townshend-Rivers, in a voice that betokened no good will to that individual.

The golfers had been forced to give up their game early because of the dusk, and most of the men were in the billiard-room, but Mr. Rivers was said to be in his own room writing letters. Lady Malvern when possessed of a piece of her mind that she wished to present to somebody else, had no scruples about disturbing him,

so she ruthlessly sent for him, and gave him the scolding which she imagined that he deserved; but he took it as placidly as an elephant would a flea-bite.

Beatrice was so full of De Winton's tragic story that she could not get it out of her head. She attacked her husband about it the moment she found herself alone with him. They had both returned to write some necessary letters in the library. At least Falconer meant his wife to write his own share, whilst he stood on the hearth-rug with his hands in his pockets, and dictated the contents at his ease. But the programme was not carried out in any of its details. Unfortunately Lord Falconer had been rubbed the wrong way all the afternoon by Pemberton. Hugh's chief offence was that he understood how to give the ball such an under-spin that he could drive it much further than anyone else. Falconer's huge strength therefore seemed to give him no advantage, and as they trudged over one mile after another his ill-temper was ever on the increase. He had kept it in rather more carefully than usual as he was anxious not to make a fool of himself whilst at Ethelred Hall, but he was feeling on edge and ready to carp and to fret about anything.

"I was told such a dreadful story at Percy's Court," his wife began quietly as she examined the point of her pen. She was as unconscious of any danger in the topic, as a hired messenger, who is given an infernal machine to carry—disguised as a bonnet box. "It is about a Mr. Gerald de Winton."

Lord Falconer made a slight movement, but said nothing.

"He and another man quarrelled about a girl; and only fancy," her voice deepening with her anger, "the other man who was the meanest, most despicable ruffian——"

"Who told you this story?" he interrupted fiercely.

Startled by his tone, she looked up at him, but could not see his expression because his head came up so far above the shaded lamp. "Miss Wingfield—a poor old maid, who——"

"D—— all old maids!" he cried savagely, his passion rising like a wave, and the veins on his forehead standing out like thick cords. "And you come to me with this story—in this hypocritical fashion—you call me to my face a despicable ruffian!"

She started up, her face as white as the sheet of paper lying on the writing case. "*You—you—I never said a word about you,*" she

stammered, as a terrible fear shot up like a ghost before her, and nearly dazed her.

"That's a lie, and you know it," he cried, carried beyond all bounds of control, because of the mean suspicion that had got hold of him. "You came home primed with this story, and you brought it out in this sneaky fashion on purpose to insult me."

"You didn't do it! Oh, for God's sake, say you didn't do it," she cried piteously, holding on to the table in front of her, for she was shaking from head to foot, and too much absorbed by the one dread that possessed her to remember to defend herself. What did it matter if he accused her of anything and everything, so long as she knew herself to be innocent, and could imagine him to be free from this hideous sin?

He thought she was only humbugging, and his anger rose to fever heat. "Stop this infernal nonsense," he shouted. "You don't take me in the least bit—you like to have this pull over me, it's so convenient to have something to bring up against me, as if a man never went into a rage before!"

"Oh, Falcon!" clasping her hands, and raising her white face imploringly, "you didn't do it—or if you did," she added inconsequently, as one offence after the other appeared in glaring colours, "you couldn't have slunk away in such a heartless fashion!"

"You think I would have stayed to be hooted at!" he cried with a sneer. "No, thank you. The fellow got in my way, so I sent him out of it, as I will your friend, the Prig—if ever he gives me the chance. You had better look out, you haven't married a weak, blubbering idiot."

"I've married a monster," she said quickly as her utter loathing and disgust flamed from her eyes, "a man without one spark of honour—one feeling proper to a gentleman."

"Hold hard, don't go too far," he interrupted roughly. Then he came forward, and leant upon the writing-table, glaring into her face, more like a wild beast than a man. He had kept himself in for these months, but he was not going to trouble himself to do so any longer. This girl at least was thoroughly in his power, and he meant her to see that he was master. In other words, he was going to enjoy himself for a few minutes, having practised self-denial till he was sick of it.

But there was one man in the house who understood Lord Fal-

coner thoroughly, having had glimpses of him during his stormy boyhood. This was Morris, Lady Malvern's butler and general factotum, and after forty years of faithful service he had grown into a confidential friend rather than a servant. Just as the Marchioness was crossing the hall with the intention of beginning the long labours of her evening toilet, Morris stepped forward, and said respectfully, but apparently *à propos des bottes*, "His Lordship is with her Ladyship in the library."

Lady Malvern understood at once that Beatrice was having a bad time of it. She made her way in that direction as quickly as she could, taking no pains to disguise her limp in her great hurry; and throwing open the door dramatically, she stood for an instant on the threshold taking in the situation at a glance. One look at Beatrice's white, hunted face, as she leant against the wall, with her husband opposite her, was sufficient to tell her that her suspicions were correct.

"Falconer," she said in a tone of command, like a commander-in-chief to his troops. He turned round quickly at the sound of her voice, and took the trouble to change his expression. She went on as if she had noticed nothing unusual. "Will you go and dress, please, and see if you can't be in time for dinner, for once in your life?"

He muttered something which she did not catch, and walked straight out of the room. To run away was habitually easy to him, and he saw that this was the easiest way out of the difficulty.

His poor wife dropped upon the chair from which she had started in the first shock of her surprise. Her clasped hands rested on the table, her small dark head was bowed upon her hands. The hugeness of the calamity which had come upon her crushed her utterly. There was no escape from it. The man whom she loved had never existed. He was simply a creation of her own foolish imagination, and she was tied for life to the monster, who nearly murdered Gerald de Winton!

"Tied for life!" Like an incessant chime the words rung in her ears. "Tied for life."

Lady Malvern stood quite still in the middle of the room, after she had secured herself from intrusion by locking the door. "Domestic tragedies differ from all others, in that they have to be acted in private," she said to herself as she turned the key. But when that

was done she did not know how to follow it up. For almost the first time in her life, standing in that silent room where even the ticking of the ornamental clock seemed aggressive—she did not know either what to say or what to do. She gave an anxious look at that forlorn figure behind the writing-table. There was something of complete surrender, a giving up of all hope, in the pose of that bowed head. To say "Never mind" would be an absurdity—for it was evident that the poor child did mind, and probably would mind to the end of her life. To tell her that "everything was for the best" would be hypocritical, for she herself had the strongest doubts on the subject. To bid her to be resigned and to bear up with christian fortitude would be impossible for *her*, for out of her own experience she knew nothing of resignation, and the utmost she herself had been able to attain to, was a stoical indifference. She had only got so far as that because she was old, and she did not care enough about anything to grieve overmuch.

For a moment she wished that she were quite a different sort of person—like that Miss Kennard for instance. Then she could have flung her arms round the poor creature and fondled her, throwing out an endearing epithet now and then—and that would have been quite sufficient, but endearments were not at all in Lady Malvern's line. She had been brought up in a hard school, and her kiss was like the peck of a bird, with no more tenderness in it.

Suddenly she advanced towards the writing-table, having made up her mind that a bracing remedy was the best. "The Cliffords were always a rough brutal set from time immemorial, and your husband is about the worst," she said quietly, as if she were talking indifferent platitudes. "If you had not found it out to-day, you would to-morrow. There is no use in disguising the truth, but there is great harm in publishing it. I shall tell everybody that you have caught cold—lie down on the sofa with your back to the light. Some dinner shall be brought you. You had better eat it—for no heart-ache was ever cured by starvation."

Beatrice raised her head at this moment and said reproachfully, "Why didn't you tell me before I married him?"

Lady Malvern looked slightly embarrassed by this awkward question coming in the midst of her sensible advice. "Because if I had, you would never have married him, and I did not want either a barmaid or a ballet-dancer introduced into the family. Selfish—I

don't deny—but it was the only hope for him. I thought you might stop him in his race down-hill. But now you must make the best of a bad business," she was going on soothingly, when she caught sight of the girl's haggard face looking ten years older than it did when they started for that fatal drive. The mere sight of it pulled her up short, and made her counsel seem a mockery. "Don't look like that, child!" she cried with a sort of gasp. "I would do anything in the world for you."

"There is nothing to be done," in a low voice out of which despair had taken all the music. Nothing to be done—and she would not be nineteen till next year! Nobody who cared for her would ever wish her "many happy returns of the day" again. "May you die as soon as ever you can"—that would be the very kindest thing to say. The corners of her pretty mouth took a pitiful droop as she rested her elbows on the table, her weary head on her clasped hands, and thought of her spoilt life.

"Hush! don't talk like that—you will give me a nightmare," Lady Malvern said with a shiver. "There are very few men worth breaking a heart for, and Falconer certainly isn't one of them." Then she looked at her niece wistfully—gave a curious twitch to her lips—went slowly towards the door and unlocked it. Before she opened it she turned round to say, "As soon as the house is quiet get to your room, and I'll send you some chloral," she opened the door and with another backward look went out. "Put off dinner for half an hour," she said to Morris as she passed him. "Lady Falconer's will be served in the library, and will be taken in by her own maid."

"I know what she feels," she said to herself, as she went slowly up the stairs. "She would like to kill him—or herself, probably the latter. On second thoughts, I won't send the chloral."

Presently she met one of her guests descending in full evening-dress, who looked at the Marchioness with open-eyed astonishment. "So sorry, my dear," she said promptly, "but you must blame the evening post." It was not the first time in her life by any means that she had found the evening post a convenient subterfuge, but Mrs. Jocelyn was quite taken in.

"No bad news, I hope," she said politely, and passed on.

(To be continued.)

The Ideal House.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

IN THE MATTER OF THE BED-ROOMS.

IN drawing a series of pictures of the Ideal House, I am, of course, pre-supposing that Edwin and Angelina are starting from the beginning or, if not quite from the beginning, that they are almost making a fresh start.

Now, I wish to point out to my young couple what many people never seem to think of, or systematically to ignore when they set about arranging their home, that the matter of the bed-rooms is a very much more important one than that of any other part of the house. In bygone days—and not so very far gone by either—anything used to be thought good enough for the bed-rooms. If there was one bed-room larger and more important than the others, it was usually kept for “the spare room,” and was only used for occasional visitors, and as a sort of superior work-room. If a dressmaker came for a few days’ work, she was usually located in the spare room, and the great bed served as a table for the frocks and petticoats she was making. Otherwise it remained, with drawn blinds and shrouded furniture unused, unless the lady of the house kept her best dresses in the capacious wardrobe. Sometimes it smelled of lavender—sometimes only musty.

The contrast between the appointments of the spare room and the ordinary bed-rooms was remarkable, and even in these enlightened days one often sees the same thing. I have in my mind’s eye a house planned as a model of the Home Beautiful. The world flocked in hundreds to see the reception rooms, and dozens of articles were written about the picture frames, the walls, the method of lighting, the harmony of the floor coverings, the perfection of everything.

If these rhapsodisers had penetrated into the upstairs regions of this celebrated house, they would, I think, have received a regular electric shock of astonishment, for room after room merited the same description—a howling wilderness. Bare wooden or iron bedsteads, with torn and soiled coverlets, dingy walls, broken chairs, painted washstands, which were almost innocent of paint, cracked crockery, small cloudy looking-glasses, strips of loose carpet, and a fusty smell over every-

thing! Pah! Below-stairs there was a gaping crowd extolling the taste and beauty of the show-rooms, while the children and their parents passed a good half of their lives in these unlovely and comfortless surroundings.

For Edwin and Angelina should remember that a good half of their lives will be passed not in the white and gold drawing-room, not in the oak-furnished dining-room, but in the bed-rooms. It is far more important to have a lofty and airy bed-room than to have those attributes for the room in which you eat your meals. Nothing can be so bad both for health and for temperament, as to sleep in a small, stuffy, ill-ventilated room, crowded with furniture and filled with articles discarded from the more often seen parts of the house. For, as I say, more that half our lives is passed in our bed-rooms. Most of the important events of life come about there: we are generally born in them, and most of us die in them. Take the case of an ordinary Angelina. She goes to bed at midnight—she rises in time for a nine o'clock breakfast, or possibly not till an hour later still. Of her daylight hours she will spend not less than two hours in her bed-room, occupied in dressing or resting—that means at least eleven out of the twenty-four, and that too when she is in perfect health. In no other room of the house does she spend as long a time, nor ever as long a time at one spell as during the unbroken hours of sleep.

I have heard people say that, when one is asleep, it does not matter what kind of a room one is in. Nonsense! One must sleep better in a large, fresh, dainty room, than in a small, stuffy one. And if it doesn't so much matter what the appearance of a room is while one is asleep, it most emphatically does matter what kind of a looking room one wakes in. And again, in times of illness, how important that the eyes and the senses shall be soothed by pleasant and cheerful surroundings. I know a distinguished painter whose wife is a somewhat delicate woman, who pretty often has to spend a few days in bed. With this fact in view, he has furnished her bedroom in very special manner, the tone of the whole being a soft deep green, all the woodwork and furniture exactly in the same tone. The panels of every door are painted with charming landscapes, pictures, flower pieces, everything which can tend to make the room restful without dullness. There is a special little door, too, leading into the lovely drawing-room, so that she can pass from one room to the other without the fatigue of mounting a few steps, which lie in the ordi-

nary way, or fear of taking a chill from the colder air of the staircase.

Personally, however, this style of bed-chamber does not please me. I like my bedroom to be very large, and to have several good-sized windows. I prefer dark red linen blinds to shade the room, and for the lower half of the windows, I like tightly drawn blinds of gay coloured muslin. I detest hangings of any kind whatever in a bedroom, but like to see the tops of the windows finished off with a brass or black and gold curtain-pole.

I like a gas-light on either side of the dressing-glass; and here, I may say that I consider electric light in a bed-room simply detestable. To dress for the evening by electric light is most disagreeable, for it always sends you out into the world with a conviction firmly planted in your mind that you are the ugliest human being that ever lived. It is the fashion to sneer at gas, to declare that sensitive natures can not exist under its baneful influence, that it ruins all decorations and deals death and destruction everywhere. It may be so; I know that it never hurt me, and that I infinitely prefer it to the electric light, to tiresome and dangerous lamps, or expensive, troublesome candles.

In every bed-room there should be at least three lights, one on either side of the dressing-table, and with an arm a-piece, so that the lights can be moved to and fro at will; the third one should be placed at the head of the bed, so that the occupant shall be able to read in comfort and without any strain to the eyes.

Some people turn up hands and eyes in horror at the very mention of such a habit, but I must confess that I cannot see where the harmfulness of it comes in. For my own part I *always* read in bed, and if I go to bed at three or four in the morning, I still have a soothing five minutes' reading.

Of course, with careless people who fall asleep over a book and let the candle topple over on to the bed-clothes and shrivel them to a cinder, one can only feel that they deserve all they get, but in such a case as mine, it is a very different thing. If I stay up until I am dead tired, I find that undressing serves to thoroughly arouse me, and I get into bed feeling so wide awake, and yet weary, that I can only toss and turn during the greater part of the night. But if I go to bed as soon as I feel just comfortably tired and settle myself for half an hour's quiet reading, I feel that I am resting my limbs and composing my nerves at once and the same time. I

therefore read till I get sleepy, and then put out my light, snuggle down among my pillows, and am asleep in a jiffy.

Of course Angelina will have to see that her servants do not indulge too much in this particular habit. As a rule their nerves do not trouble them much, and they sleep much more readily than we do. Fortunately accidents from this cause are not many. As a matter of fact, I never remember in my own experience but one case of fire from a servant's leaving her candle alight by her bedside. It happened in this way: A few years ago we imported a French maid for our children. She was fresh-caught from her native town, a beautiful young creature, golden blonde and sunburned, with a profile like the head of the French Republic, which you may see on the coins of France to-day. She was fairly educated, and spoke good French; but she was an unmitigated hussy who would not keep her fasts, would not follow her mother's behests, and who for seven weeks gave us an infinitude of anxiety and trouble and only one bit of amusement by way of set-off.

That, by-the-bye, was one day when my boy Bootles, whom she dearly loved at first sight, was sitting on her knee, when she suddenly clasped him in a violent hug, crying: "Oh! Monsieur Boo-cloose (*all* French servants call Bootles, Boo-cloose), *comme je t'adore!*" The boy, who then knew not one word of French, got down from her knee and ran to the door. But finding it shut, he turned to her indignantly. "How can I shut the door when it is shut?" he demanded—then added one disgusted word by way of comment: "Silly!"

But to my muttons. This damsel retired to bed one night, and was an hour later discovered fast asleep by the parlourmaid, her rosary and her "Garden of the Soul" in her hand, and the candle, which for some wholly unexplained reason, she had taken out of the candlestick and set on the table-cover, burned down to the polished wood of the dressing-table. We promptly presented the young lady with a ticket for home, and saw her off *en route* thereto two days later; but seriously I don't think that her narrow chance of burning our house down can justly be set down to "reading in bed."

Still, I set out to write an article on the furnishing of bed-rooms, and am wandering shamefully away from my point. Let us go back to our bed-rooms and wander no more! Garrulity is the greatest drawback of writing chit-chat; one writes on and writes on, like some of

the parsons drone on in the pulpit, knowing that no one can answer or interrupt there and then. Forgive me this time, I beg.

So to our bed-rooms. Well, my good Edwin and Angelina, take my advice and make your sleeping rooms as bright and gay as you possibly can. Have nice clean ceilings, clean fresh walls of a bright colour, and for absolute comfort an asbestos gas fire. Don't have any mysterious arrangements which you do not understand, but see that in the bottom of your fire-grate you have a perforated fire-brick gas holder (I don't know the technical name for this), and then that the whole grate is filled with lumps of asbetos. There must be an air tube going somewhere up the chimney; and a nice trivet and kettle. Then you are independent by day and by night both for heat and hot water. The comfort of a properly laid gas fire is incalculable. If you are dressing for the evening, you need only light it while you are actually in the room. Your maid can light it and turn it down low the last thing before she goes to bed, and when you come home from your party or dance, you have your room warm and cosy, and can make a cup of tea in five minutes. If you are ill you can burn a gas fire for weeks and you can keep the room *to a degree* in temperature with care in regulating the gas taps. A basin of water set inside the fender prevents any smell, and a bronchitis kettle will keep steaming just as long as you choose.

For the carpet of a bed-room, I prefer of all others a good Wilton; next to that, a good Brussels. I like the carpet to be fitted to the room. I loathe bed-valances, but like a large white quilt or smart bed-spread for day use; each may be taken off at night.

Personally, I prefer the dressing-table to have a marble top like the wash-stand, not white, no, not white, for that has a look of the graveyard about it; it should either be red or gray. I like to see lots of pretty things on a lady's dressing-table: silver, ivory, ebony, it matters little which, so long as they are kept clean and tidy. Cut-glass bottles, Limoges toilet sets, Cloisonné jars and boxes; even the cheap and humble ivorine or xylonite, all tend to show that the room is the chamber of a dainty lady.

There should be no flowers in a bedroom, beyond at most a couple of vases on the dressing-table. As to the actual furniture—well, it is immaterial whether it is of costly wood or of dainty enamel. See that it is firm and solid, and that it gives room for all necessities. Have a firmly standing table beside the bed, and a couple of comfortable easy

chairs; and if the room is large, a cosy couch. A waste-paper basket or smartly painted box for odds and ends of rubbish is a comfort, and a couple of pretty wall cupboards, one for medicines, and one for little toilet necessities, are essential. Have as many bright pictures as you like, and always, dear Angelina, bear in mind that half an hour of morning sunshine is worth more than two hours of air in the later half of the day.

(*To be continued.*)

Nurse Hyde's Experiences.

By J. BARRETT-KNOX.

SWIFTLY as the train sped upon its way towards Zoughton, the thoughts of Elizabeth Hyde travelled at an even faster rate. Back in an instant to the starting point of her journey did her memory flash, contrasting her past life with the unknown future before her.

She realised that the coming change in her outward *environment* would certainly prove what was "her inward capability of action," and that although to herself she would remain the same, to others her past individuality had vanished with fortune and home.

She felt like a picture torn out of its frame: an "old master" turned with its face to the wall, and looked upon as a mere sketch amongst the many hundreds of similar canvasses in the world's picture gallery.

The engine slackened speed, and Elizabeth collected her parcels.

"Exit Miss Hyde, of Hyde Abbey and Belgrave Square," she murmured, nodding an imaginary farewell to the empty compartment, "Enter Nurse Hyde, one of the probationers in ordinary to the inmates of Zoughton Infirmary."

She stepped from the train and looked back along the line, then with a final good-bye to the past, turned towards the crowd surrounding the luggage van.

An active little American had seized upon one of the few available porters, and Elizabeth saw her own trunk rapidly borne out of the station and placed upon a dusty fly.

As she claimed her property, there was an amused twinkle in the eyes of the energetic New Yorker.

"I guess that's British diplomacy," she exclaimed. "Have I pulled all your chestnuts out of the fire? No, don't thank me. Here comes my pile!" And away she darted, leaving Elizabeth to enter the fly, and be driven away, through the pine woods and over the common to the entrance of Zoughton Infirmary.

Josiah, the hall porter, quickly made her realise her position, as he bade her curtly "Wait, while he sent for the assistant matron."

His messenger soon returned, followed by a tall, thin person, whose list shod feet made no sound, and who walked with her body inclined at a forward angle, which seemed to increase the giraffe-like length of her neck.

The sideways carriage of the smooth head, as she seemingly used only one eye at a time, gave the curious impression that she was dumb and straining every nerve to catch each passing sound.

Miss Jeune had been assistant matron for nine years, and her *soubriquet* amongst the nurses suited her exactly. "Creeping Jenny" she had been dubbed after the eventful night, when, to test the nerves of an excitable Irish probationer, she had glided from her room and approached Nurse O'Hara, in the dark corridor at two o'clock one winter morning, lightly clad in a white dressing gown. The nerves, not only of Nurse O'Hara, but of all the patients and nurses within scream, were tested, for after one startled yell, the terrified girl dropped the tray she was carrying, tumbled backwards down a flight of shallow stairs, and went into hysterics upon the mat at the bottom!

Miss Jeune approached Elizabeth, and in a soft, husky voice said:

"Nurse Hyde, I suppose? Your train must have been late, as it is past six o'clock. Come upstairs and I will show you your cubicle. The matron will see you to-morrow morning."

Elizabeth climbed five flights of stairs, and walked along five corridors. At the end of the fifth was her room.

Each cubicle contained a bed, a chair, a table, and a washing stand, also a chest of drawers with a small looking glass upon it. The partition walls did not reach the ceiling by two feet, and the window of the centre cubicle ventilated the apartment on either side. A terribly draughty arrangement in cold weather.

"When you have put on your cap and apron, you can come down stairs to the dining hall, where we have supper at eight o'clock."

Nurse Elizabeth took the starched disc and apron from Miss Jeune, and after her departure, tried to reduce the stiffened linen to a wearable shape. She twisted and pleated and shook it, until a voice came over the partition :

"Is that a new probationer, wrestling with a new cap?"

"It is," sighed Elizabeth, "at least it was a new cap a few minutes ago."

"Bring it to me, and I will show you how to arrange it."

Pushing open the door, Elizabeth saw Nurse O'Brien, whose dark eyes were dancing with fun, as she held out a slender hand, saying :

"I have been on night duty. Don't apologise for waking me, it is not your fault, but the scientific arrangement of this most enlightened hospital. The nurses off night duty sleep next door to the nurses on day duty, and as you will notice, the chapel harmonium lulls us to rest whenever a daily service or practice is going on. These cubicles are just above the chapel, and you can hear most of the service." While she spoke, her clever fingers had evolved a shapely cap from the crumpled linen. "Now bend your tall back. How it will ache by the end of the week. Ahem ! Nurse Clytie in a night-cap ! Mrs. Wyles will be charmed to see how well it suits you. Unfortunately your hair is thick and ripples naturally, for Creeping Jenny likes all our heads to be as smooth as her own, and 'the cap to rest upon the brow.' I am just going to dress, for the night nurses have hot dinner at eight o'clock, and go on duty at half past."

"How many patients do you have charge of in your ward?" Elizabeth asked.

"I have twenty-two now, and four of them are in the 'special.' It seems easy work after my last year at L—— Infirmary, where I had thirty-two beds, and no one to help me at night, unless a patient died, and then the night sister came in. As all the patients had to be washed and made ready for breakfast, before the two day nurses came on duty at seven o'clock, I had to begin washing the poor things at three or four o'clock in the morning ! Most of them were very patient and uncomplaining, although I really agreed with one old woman who said, 'Taint a bad place to bide in, when one gets accustomed to the discomfort of the cleanliness !' Now hurry, or you will be late for supper."

Elizabeth found the dining hall on the third floor : it was a long, narrow room, in the centre of which stood a very long table. Here were seated fifteen sisters and nurses.

Miss Jeune waved Elizabeth to a vacant place, and proceeded to carve the cold leg of mutton, and dispense the fresh herrings; a sister at the other end of the table poured out the coffee, which Elizabeth handed on to her neighbours.

By the time she had tasted and shuddered at the fish, which was fresh only in name, nearly half the allotted fifteen minutes had departed, and but eight remained in which to consume the hot bread pudding which was next served out. Elizabeth could not follow the example of her nearest neighbour, who poured cold water into her plate and then finished her supper.

Hungry she had sat down, and hungry she went to bed, but during the next few days realised that a good supper could generally be obtained if she avoided fish, and chose the excellent and well-cooked meat and puddings. Many of the nurses were able to capture slices of bread and cheese, and eat them while the supper was being cleared away, and the room made ready for prayers; for punctually at eight fifteen Miss Jeune rose from the table, and dismissed the first supper party, who waited in their cubicles or round the dining hall, while the second supper was served for those who had been in the wards until the night nurses came on duty. Prayers followed at nine o'clock.

After a good night, Nurse Hyde was down to breakfast at six forty-five. The fare was not sumptuous—tea and coffee, and plenty of bread. In front of each nurse stood a small china dish containing what remained of her weekly half-pound of butter, and to each table of fifteen hungry women did Miss Jeune dispense one tin of sardines. After breakfast Elizabeth had an interview with the matron, and quite lost her heart to the sweet face and pleasant voice which greeted her.

Then followed her introduction to the men's medical ward. Julia, the ward-maid, handed her over to the sister; and her first task was to finish polishing all the brass-work on the windows and "lockers."

While she rubbed, Elizabeth glanced down the ward; the ten beds on either side were occupied, and some of the patients looked very ill, one man especially with a fever-flushed face, was tossing to and fro. The sister watched him for a few minutes until called off to the

other end of the room, when she left a probationer by the sick man, telling her to turn his pillows and keep the clothes over him.

At this minute the house-surgeon came to the bedside and asked :

"What is the temperature, nurse?"

"I don't know, sir," replied the little probationer, who, like Elizabeth, was on duty for the first time in her life.

"Don't know!" echoed the doctor, "take it at once, put the thermometer in his mouth."

Turning to the next bed, Dr. Ormerod left Nurse Rollin in helpless bewilderment, the only thermometer she had ever seen was the large zinc one, with which the sister had shortly before taken the temperature of a bath.

To hear was to obey. Nurse Rollin fetched the instrument, and timidly advancing to the patient, whispered :

"Open your mouth."

The man stared, and ejaculated gruffly, "'Twouldn't go in if I did."

"Open your mouth, *please*," the little pro. entreated. "The doctor said you were to."

The man shook his head, and held the sheet firmly in both hands.

By this time several of the patients were interested spectators, and were sitting up in bed watching.

Dr. Ormerod turned round. "Well, nurse, what is the temperature?"

"He won't let me take it."

"Not have his temperature taken! Nonsense, my man, open your mouth at once."

The patient obeyed, and Nurse Rollin once more timidly advanced the huge bath thermometer.

"Good heavens, nurse!" ejaculated the doctor.

Poor little pro. ! The shout of laughter from the other beds quite overcame her, and she burst into tears, as the sister hurried back and explained. This probationer made a first-rate nurse in the end, though for weeks she had to run the gauntlet of the patients' chaff, when they implored her to "take their tempers"—half a dozen times a day. The wards at Zoughton Infirmary were very bright, and in the centre of each stood three tables, with pretty cloths and tall pots of ferns and flowers upon them. The lockers on either side of the ward were covered with an array of porringers and vulcanite

trays for holding dressings, or for making poultices in, etc., etc. The Turkey red quilts on the beds and the scarlet jackets of the patients were very picturesque—and the beautifully polished parquet floors and shining brass beds and locker handles gave evidence of cleanliness and thoroughly good management. As the days passed Elizabeth grew accustomed to the long hours of standing, stooping, and lifting.

Her work commenced at seven o'clock, when all patients had to be washed, and beds made. At nine the ward sister read prayers, and half an hour later, luncheon of soup, or milk, and bread was served out, before the house surgeon made his rounds. The mid-day meal consisted of hot meat, vegetables and milk puddings for those who were not on special diet of soup or fish. One long table was always kept clear, and upon this the white cloth was laid. Here the food was cut up so that the patients got it quickly and hot, instead of its being carried from the ward kitchens. Afternoon tea was at four, and supper of milk, soup, cocoa and bread, at seven. Evening prayers were read at eight, and the lights were lowered directly afterwards. In the accident ward the night nurse had often time to get through a good deal of needlework, as she sat by the fire with a shaded lamp, but in the medical ward the patients generally kept her trotting to and fro, and at four o'clock she had to begin breakfast preparations in the ward kitchen, cutting piles of bread and butter, and arranging the trays and bed tables for each patient who was well enough to feed himself. Some convalescents were able to get up and dress by six o'clock, and they helped the nurse boil the eggs, make the tea and take round the breakfast trays. The ward had to be quite tidy and all food cleared away into the kitchen by seven o'clock.

There were many duties which seemed strange to Elizabeth at first, but perhaps one of her greatest trials was the loss of her bath-room. After twelve hours standing her feet and limbs ached wearily, and she asked the nurse in the cubicle next her own, to show her the bath-room.

Nurse Brown laughed, and opened a door opposite the stairs.

"I thought this was a store room!" said Elizabeth.

"So it is; you see Mrs. Wyles finds it a convenient place to keep the apples in, and the heating apparatus has been out of order for six months. So although the nurses are supposed to have the

luxury of a bath-room, as a matter of fact we have to carry our water up from the kitchen, whenever we wish for a hot bath. It does not so much matter in the summer, cold water is refreshing, but in the winter it is no joke."

"How is it that the members of the Infirmary Board have not found out such mismanagement?"

"Because there are more things in Heaven and earth *and* in Zough-ton Infirmary than are dreamt of in their philosophy! If there was only one woman on the committee, she would have found out many things that require altering, but during the two years that I have been here, the members of the Board act like well regulated automats. Mr. A—— invariably arrives at tea time on the first Monday in each month. It is his day to-morrow, and you will hear Creeping Jenny say 'Make the tea a little stronger to-day nurse,' for a teacup is the only object he inspects.

"On Wednesday Colonel B—— always calls, and his mania is *cobwebs*. He strolls in with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling and corners, and observes nothing upon a lower level.

"On Thursday beware of having a scrap of soiled linen in any of the ward baskets, for Mr. C—— opens every lid, and never appears to realise that the ward-maid may have carried off all the contents a few hours before, and that soiled linen has to remain in the basket until the nurse has time to remove it. If you hear Mr. C—— coming, run with your basket to the bath-room and hide it, or you will have a ward lecture for half an hour on atmospheric impurities engendered by storing soiled linen amongst your patients! Nurse O'Hara has been here for nearly three years, and when she departs, if she only has a chance of an interview with the Board, *after* she has obtained her certificate from Mrs. Wyles she will try and get the bath put right for us." Poor Nurse O'Hara her merry Irish nature had endeared her to all the other nurses and patients, but before her time had expired, her health began to break down, and, after a particularly trying case of typhoid, which she nursed devotedly for eighteen weeks, she was seen one day flying across the common towards the town in such an excited state, that it was at once apparent that her mind was affected. She fortunately met Nurse Maitland, who persuaded her to get into a passing fly and return to the Infirmary. There was some method in her madness, for when she entered the hall she knelt upon the stones and loudly

and solemnly prayed Heaven to remove all the abuses which had hitherto been unknown to the committee.

In vain the matron and Miss Jeune and the house surgeon endeavoured to get her upstairs. Two members of the Board were also present, and Nurse O'Hara's ravings enlightened them, and the house surgeon, about much that had hitherto gone on unknown and unchecked. The merry little Irish nurse was seen no more in the wards, for her strength was too exhausted to fight against the brain fever that supervened, and she passed away after only a week's illness.

A few days afterwards, when Nurse Elizabeth was on duty, the sister called her to help prepare a bed for an accident. It is a case of attempted suicide, the telegram says. An Italian jumped over-board as his ship entered Zoughton harbour! The man soon arrived; he was tall and elderly, with thickly curling grey hair and fine aquiline features.

After a few minutes the sister looked at Nurse Elizabeth, and whispered, "What shall we do! It is a woman. Go and tell the house surgeon at once."

The men in the ward next saw the unconscious figure carried past the screens that had surrounded the bed, and concluded the new comer was so ill that he was going into a special small ward. Neither they nor the woman in the ward where the insensible patient was placed knew of the tragedy thus being played out.

After some hours the Italian looked round with a bewildered gaze past one of the screens which had shifted; she caught sight of the occupants of the other beds, and exclaimed: "What have you done! I am a man, and should not be here!"

Nurse Elizabeth bent over her and said gently, "Your secret is discovered, but you are with friends who will take care of you."

After one agonised exclamation of "*Don't betray me!*" the Italian relapsed into a despairing silence, from which no words of kindness could rouse her. She refused to speak again, except once, when she asked for her pipe. She smoked silently, or lay with her dark eyes gazing into the future, but no one in the hospital could induce her to open her lips, and at the end of ten days she passed silently away with death, into the country where all secrets are revealed to Him who knows and understands. Amongst the papers found in her pocketbook, were testimonials from well known Europeans, with

whom she had travelled for fifty years. As "Luigi the Courier" she was well known, but no one had discovered her sex, nor was the reason ever found out which had made her assume the disguise of a man when only seventeen years old. Unknown she had lived, and in silence she died, having been driven by the agony of a mortal disease to seek death, rather than have her secret discovered. Her papers were sent to the Italian Consul, but no clue to her identity was ever obtained. The weeks and months passed and Elizabeth's year of probationership had expired; she found the work absorbingly interesting, and in the characters of the patients a never ending study, while the kindness and skill of the doctors taught her many a lesson, and won the gratitude of even the roughest inmates.

"If you please, gentlemen," said a poor woman one day, who had been cruelly injured in a threshing machine, and whose right leg the doctors feared must be amputated, "If you *please* gentlemen, I came into the world with two legs, and please God I will go out of the world with both of them." She pleaded effectually, and finally recovered, although the injured leg was of no use again, and she had to walk with crutches until the day of her death. The patients tried to show their gratitude in various ways, and Nurse Elizabeth was much touched by the would-be kindness of an old cabman, who, when leaving the ward, slipped twopence into her hand, as he thanked her for her care of him.

A curious mishap befel the surgeons one day. The theatre was at the top of the building, and as usual the doctors stepped into the lift, and were started off by the porter, who then went back to the outer hall. The lift stuck in the shaft half way up, and remained there for an hour, the nurses in the operating room imagining that something unusual was detaining the surgeons downstairs, and the porter believing that they had ascended to the sixth floor as usual and had let themselves out. Fortunately no phonograph was attached to the lift to record the conversation of the prisoners—it is sufficient to say that when discovered and released, their mental temperatures had risen far above the normal, and in fact had reached boiling point!

Nurse Elizabeth was now in the women's surgical ward, and was much struck by the wonderful cheerfulness of the patients, compared with the women in the medical wards; the latter were generally patient and uncomplaining, but became more quickly depressed than

the surgical cases. Here the observations she had made during her parish visiting at home were confirmed, and she constantly realised that to the suffering poor this world seems but a temporary dwelling-place, and Heaven the goal of happiness which they truly desire to reach. That others realise it too, who are naturally more reticent, was shown one day when a girl was brought into the hospital by her husband and her mother. She had been frightfully injured by a runaway horse, and the house surgeon quickly saw the case was nearly hopeless. He explained to the husband that an operation might save her life, but he feared the worst.

"You know best, sir, save her for me if you can," was the answer, "and don't keep me away longer than you must."

Ten minutes passed, but not even Dr. O——'s skill, nor the help of the other surgeons present availed. She was sinking, and an operation would not save her, was their conclusion. Her husband was brought into the theatre as she recovered consciousness.

With perfect calmness she gazed at the doctors and nurses, and whispered, "I am dying, pray for me please doctor."

Dr. O—— glanced at the faces round him, then quietly knelt and prayed aloud until the end came peacefully.

He had given many lessons in the theatre, but, by neither nurses nor students, was that day's teaching ever forgotten.

(To be continued.)

Leaves from our Trysting Place.

I plucked a leaf in the early spring,
So tender, and fresh, and sweet,
It 'minded me of the voice's ring
Of one I was wont to meet.

I plucked a leaf in the autumn time,
Its tints were mellowed, and ripe,
It 'minded me of a form in its prime
Of womanhood's noblest type.

I plucked a leaf in the wintry blast,
Its surface was cover'd with snow,
It 'minded me of one lov'd to the last,
Of white locks that now lie low.

PENELOPE GRAHAM.

Purification versus Putrefaction.

By P. B.

"SMOOTH your way to the head through the heart," was Lord Chesterfield's wise advice to his son, and where an appeal to reason and sentiment is involved, it is well to grapple with the sentimental side of the question, before bringing reason to bear on the subject. The long association of habit and custom with the prevailing method of disposing of the lifeless forms of those we love, is still so powerful a factor to the hindrance of health and progress, that it may come as a surprise to many to hear that the old Germanic custom of burning the bodies of the dead, prevailed at one time in England, as testified by the urns discovered in various parts of Great Britain, most numerous near Stonehenge. In the Heroic ages cremation was largely practiced by the Greeks, both in Europe and Asia Minor, while later the practice was continued even when burial had also become common. Their great law-giver, Solon, was cremated by his own express wish. Although the early Christians were adverse to burning, and adopted burial, in this they merely followed the custom of the Jews, who always buried their dead, with a few notable exceptions, as that of Saul and his sons, who were burnt by the men of Jabesh-Gilead; and in certain cases to honour their kings, as recorded in Jeremiah xxxiv—v.

The books of the New Testament contain no injunctions as to the disposal of the dead, and those who, in the face of science; still fondly cherish the idea that the same body will rise from the grave, composed of the same identical particles, utterly disregard St. Paul's explicit statement, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." "We sow *not that* body that *shall* be." But no doubt the idea that cremation has a tendency to undermine the doctrine of the Resurrection, still lingers. This is due, however, not to excess of fervent faith and zeal, as might be supposed, but to want of faith, as the Rev. R. Usher, of the Church of England, has so forcibly pointed out. In his lecture on the subject at Ventnor, he told his audience, "Our real objection to Cremation is because our faith in the Resurrection is feeble. Men do not like to think the bodily form

disappears (though, by the way, this it does in any case). If we believe that the soul is the form of the body, remaining, though the matter of the body is dispersed, the identical atoms of iron and carbon need not be restored by a needless miracle. . . . We have already taken into ourselves atoms which may have formed part of our ancestors or the Pharaohs." Yet in spite of the spread of knowledge, and even of St. Paul's own assertion, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," christian sentiment still predisposes many minds to prefer inhumation for the simple reason that Christ was buried, utterly ignoring the fact that this can in no way touch the question, as all Christians, whether Church or Chapel-goers, believe that Christ rose again the third day, and that His flesh never saw corruption. Nor was His body nailed into a coffin, and lowered into a pit, euphemistically termed grave, which is the fate of all those who are now committed to the earth. And what a ghastly fate awaits their bodies there, in what sorrowing relatives love to call "their last resting place."

Last resting place, indeed! How little do the bereaved ones realize that so far from the grave being their last resting place, it is only a temporary repository for the forms of those they love. The law permits the re-opening and excavation of graves at the expiration of fourteen years, for the reception of other bodies, and yet the chairman of the Manchester Crematorium, Mr. Henry Simon, C.E., has stated that "the period of *entire* decomposition of a body is certainly not *under* fifty years." But as the law stands, anyone who has not the wherewithal to purchase a grave in perpetuity, is liable, nay, almost certain, to have his or her remains dug up at the end of the legal period, to make room for other bodies. So crowded are the graveyards in all large cities, that it is a common occurrence—in that part of the cemetery where paupers are buried—for twenty or thirty coffins to be placed in one grave, with only a foot of earth between each. Little wonder is it, that amongst the poor there is a wide-spread dread of a pauper's funeral, and many a poor woman will stint and deny herself the very necessities of life, if haply she may put by enough to guard against this unhappy fate. "What the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve for," is surely the only sentiment which permits the survivors to commit the bodies of those they once fondly cherished, to be the food for worms and other creeping crawling things, instead of reverently consigning the

empty shell to the purifying action of the flames, which do not even touch the body, but by the draught of intense heat that passes over the corpse, dissolves it in about the space of an hour, sometimes less, to a handful of pure ashes. These may afterwards be buried in the usual way without injury to the living, or if preferred may be carefully preserved in an urn. Since it is a law of nature that the body, when the animating spirit of life has left it, must be dissolved into its constituent elements, why prolong an unspeakably gruesome process over a long period of years, and consign the body to slow and horrible corruption, when the same result, minus the putrefaction, may be arrived at expeditiously without the terrible results that attend earth burial. Apart from this consideration, the perils of premature interment have filled the bravest hearts with fear, and not without good reason, for the only certain sign of death is one which the survivors never wait for—decomposition. This is very evident from the paper read by Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson before the Medical Society of London, a few years ago, on "The Absolute Signs and Proofs of Death;" he mentions several cases that came under his own personal notice, of persons who presented every appearance of death and yet lived. After enumerating no less than eleven signs of death, he sums up by saying, "*If* all these signs point to death; *if* there be no signs of respiratory function; *if* there be no signs of movement of the pulse or heart, and no sounds of the heart; *if* the veins of the hand do not enlarge on the distal side of the fillet; *if* the blood in the veins contains a coagulum; *if* the galvanic stimulus fails to produce muscular contraction; *if* the injection of ammonia causes a dirty brown blotch, the evidence may be considered conclusive that death is absolute."

Yet in spite of these numerous tests, which he puts forward as conclusive evidence, he adds, "*If* these signs leave any doubt, or even *if they leave no doubt*, one further point of practice should be carried out. The body should be kept in a room, the temperature of which has been raised to 84 deg. Fahr., with moisture diffused through the air; and in this warm and moist atmosphere it should remain until distinct indications of putrefactive decomposition has set in."

What does all this amount to, but the statement that nothing short of putrefaction can be regarded as certain evidence of death? If so

many tests alone afford positive proof of death, it is evident that under the existing system of death certification, where in numerous cases no doctor has been in attendance prior to the supposed mortality, or even seen the deceased, and the Registrar is informed of the event by a friend or relative, the risk of premature burial is terribly increased. Yet that this is by no means an unusual procedure is borne out by the report of the Registrar-General, for of those who died in England and Wales in the year 1892, he reports 15,000 cases of burial without a medical certificate, a number equivalent to 3 per cent. on the total returns of the year, to which must be added another 25,000, or 5 per cent., whose deaths were reported as "so inadequately certified as not to be classifiable." Under these circumstances it could only be expected that the report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, with Sir Walter Foster, M.D., as chairman, appointed by Mr. Asquith in 1893 to enquire into these matters, should have proved far from reassuring. They reported that the evidence as to the class of uncertified deaths (3 per cent.) is "such as to force upon your Committee the conviction that vastly more deaths occur annually from foul play and criminal neglect than the law recognises." Even the class of certified deaths they found did not bear investigation, as summed up in their statement "that so far as affording a record of the *true cause* of death, and the detection of it in cases where deaths may have been due to violent poison or criminal neglect is concerned, the class of certified deaths leaves much to be desired."

The case of the girl Clover, who was poisoned in 1892, although her death was certified as due to natural causes, is an instance in point. The physician who gave the certificate, a thoroughly qualified practitioner, had never seen the girl, but accepted the statements made to him without any inquiry, and this is quite a common occurrence where the poorer classes are concerned. And yet the only rational objection urged against cremation has been the supposed facility it offers for the concealment of crime. But what are the facts of the case? In Dr. Cameron's address to Parliament in 1884, when introducing the bill for the "Disposal of the Dead," he points out the fallacy of imagining that should suspicion arise as to cause of death *after* burial, all that is required is the exhumation of the body. He told the House of Commons, "It is quite true that certain poisons can be discovered in buried remains for months and years after death, but the most subtle organic and vegetable poisons, and even some of the

elementary poisons, such as phosphorus, themselves participate in the decay of their victim in the grave, and some of them so rapidly, that in a very brief space of time all trace of them disappears." So that he rightly argues "the lesson of all this is the supreme importance from a medico-legal point of view of a prompt verification of the cause of death." And he calls attention to the provision made in France and Germany for ascertaining the true cause of death. In these countries it is the duty of a State-appointed Surgeon in all large cities to examine the dead, and in Paris and some other towns his written permit is required before the body can be removed. Dr. Cameron concluded his lucid and exhaustive speech, advocating Cremation under supervision, by the clinching argument that, "So far as the destruction of evidences of poisoning is concerned, the difference between cremation and inhumation, is simply one of degree. As to mineral poisons, direct experiments instituted by M. Cadet and repeated by MM. Dourvault and Worst, have proved that the salts of arsenic and all other vegetable poisons, except mercury, which is completely volatilised, can be detected in the ashes after cremation. As to organic poisons, most, if not all of them, are destroyed by putrefaction, though of course more slowly than by fire. But what is wanted to ensure their detection is prompt verification of the cause of death."

The President of the Cremation Society of England, Sir Henry Thompson, F.R.C.S., M.B., London, states that as regards the danger of mistaking unconsciousness for death, "with cremation *no such catastrophe could ever occur*," as "the guarantee against this danger would be doubled, since the inspection of the entire body must of necessity *immediately precede the act of cremation*, no such inspection being possible under the present system of burial."

It may not be generally known that no cremation ever takes place without two certificates from duly qualified medical men as to the cause of death, one, at least, of whom *must* have attended the deceased.

The cost of an ordinary middle-class funeral has been estimated by Sir Henry Thompson as not less than £10, inclusive of the coffin, funeral carriages, digging of grave, and in fact all the expenses incurred for interment, with the exception of the conveyance of the body, which of course would be the same whether the remains were cremated or buried. The cost of cremating a body at Woking is at present £5, including a simple urn for the preservation

of the ashes; but at the Manchester Crematorium a reduced scale of £2 2s. has been adopted for the working classes and persons of limited means. At Woking the cost could also be reduced if incineration became more general, for the furnace now has to be heated specially for each single cremation. In Paris, where eleven or twelve incinerations take place daily, the expense of fuel is very materially reduced, and Professor Gorini has calculated that it would only entail a nominal cost of a few shillings if it were largely practised.

But altogether apart from the economic advantages of incineration, the dangers to the living from the dead under the present method is of supreme gravity. To leave a dead body to rot on the surface of the ground would be judged a disgrace to any civilised community, but to consign it to putrify in the grave with a few feet of earth thrown over it, is still the common practice. And since the process of rotting underground extends over a period of twenty years in the case of adult bodies, Dr. Edmund Parkes' (Professor of Military Hygiene at the Army Medical School at Netley) conclusion is inevitable. He asserts that "burying in the ground appears certainly the most insanitary plan of the three methods," namely, burial in the earth, or at sea, or burning. "The air over the cemeteries," he adds, "is constantly contaminated, and water which may be used for drinking is often highly impure. Hence, in the vicinity of graveyards, two dangers to the population arise, and in addition, from time to time, the disturbance of an old graveyard has given rise to disease."

In 1874, Tooting Cemetery was the subject of an official investigation. It was then found that the *entire* drainage of the cemetery was discharged into the river Wandle by means of a ditch, and many of the inhabitants drew their water supplies from the polluted river. But Tooting Cemetery is not more defective in sanitation than Kensal Green, Highgate, Norwood, and Brompton, which were all condemned by the Board of Health in 1850, and declared to be unfit for further burial. In spite of this emphatic condemnation, all of them are still in use, and in Dr. Sutherland's Report to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, he asserts that "the only cemetery company which combines in its practice a proper regard to public *health* and *decency* is the London Necropolis Company." But of course it is only a question of time before their large burying ground of 2,000 acres also becomes overcrowded, although now it is exclusively reserved for the dead of London only.

It is time, therefore, that public attention should be called to the matter, and that the remarks made by the Prince of Wales on the subject should be borne in mind. He recommended that: "In view of the rapidly increasing population of the kingdom, the present system of the burial of the dead, should be exchanged for one more in accordance with the requirements of the age, and the sanitary interests of the community."

Do the Dead Return?

By JANET A. McCULLOCH.

CHAPTER I.

AT BALDWIN'S COURT.

My grand aunt Felicia was dead, the black edged letter lay before me addressed in my cousin Frank's handwriting. Yes, the poor old lady was gone, and I felt really sorry, for she had been kind to me before Frank and his sister had acquired such influence over her. The news was most unexpected, and before I had recovered from the shock, Sir John Bridge (whose private secretary I was) entered the room.

"What's amiss, Julian?" he asked kindly as he sat down to his letters, "Had bad news, eh?"

For answer I handed him the intimation. He read it, then glanced at the date.

"You should have received this sooner," he said. "The date of death is the fourth, and this is the eighth—you may just be in time for the funeral if you start for Baldwin's Court at once."

I looked at the date; Sir John was right; but how could they have been so careless? They knew where I was.

"Can I get away on such short notice, sir?" I asked.

"You can take a few days quite easily, Julian. You had better look up the trains at once, you haven't a minute to spare if it's the North Western you go by."

I seized a time-table and found that if I caught the 10.20 train

from Euston, I could reach Baldwin's Court in the afternoon. My preparations were soon made, and with my small valise I sprang into a hansom. Sir John called after me not to hurry back unless he wired, and I hastened off, fearing to lose the express train. But I was in time after all, and as I sped along at quick speed, I thought of poor aunt Felicia, and hoped I might yet be in time for the funeral. It seemed strange that Rasper had not written to tell me of her illness. Rasper was her maid, and had always been fond of me as a child. After I grew up, too, she had been devoted to "Master Julian," in spite of my getting into disgrace with her mistress; so her silence surprised me.

I had not seen my father's aunt for eight years, not since I was nineteen, when my cousin Felicia had made some mischief, as I suspected; but while I was abroad I had heard now and then from Rasper, telling me how things were going on. My cousin Felicia was almost always at Baldwin's Court, and her brother Frank paid long visits, indeed they seemed to have acquired great influence over the old lady. Rasper thought it probable they would try and get her to settle the estate and most of the money upon Frank, for my name seemed to be in bad odour with them all, and if Rasper ventured to mention it, she was promptly told to hold her tongue. All this recurred to me as I sped along, and I wondered how I should find things in the old house. My father's aunt was a very wealthy woman; she had been named after a rich spinster relative who left her all she had, and besides this she had inherited a considerable fortune from my great grandmother, for she had been the only daughter and was much younger than her brothers. My father was the son of the eldest brother, but Frank and his twin sister were considerably older than I was, quite ten years. I had once been aunt Felicia's favourite, but I had been away so long in India and China, that she might have forgotten my very existence, while the others were always there. I was making my own way and did not need her money, but for all that I grudged Frank having it. He was not a straightforward or honourable man, and his sister was very little better. I did not telegraph to Frank *en route*, so when at last the train steamed into Heys—the little station I was bound for—I had to hire a trap at the nearest inn—the "Heys Arms"—to take me the four miles between the station and Baldwin's Court. It was after six o'clock when I found myself at the end of my

journey, and a glance at the big, old, rambling mansion convinced me that the funeral was over. The blinds were drawn up and many of the windows open. My knock was answered by a stranger, in the place of old Barnes, the ancient butler (the only man my grand aunt allowed to sleep in the house), and my enquiry for Mr. or Miss Eastwell was civilly received. I was requested to wait in the morning room, and asked to give my name.

"Say it is Mr. Julian," I said, "I have forgotten my cards."

It was fully half an hour before Felicia came in, though I had distinctly caught the sound of her voice several times, evidently conversing with Frank in another room.

Felicia had always been handsome, in a cold still sort of way, and the deep mourning she wore became her better than any colour could have done. I knew she must be quite thirty-seven, but she had "worn well"—there was not a single wrinkle round her eyes, not a white thread in her abundant fair hair; her figure was as fine as ever, her step as elastic. The change in my appearance seemed to take her by surprise, for she started when she came in.

"Julian! you here?" she said, faltering a little, but holding out her hand. Felicia's hand was large, white and beautifully shaped, but very strong.

"Yes," I answered quietly, "I came off at once, but I suppose I am too late for the funeral."

"It was yesterday," she said in a low tone, as if it cost her an effort.

"Why was I not told in time, Felicia?" I asked hastily. "Surely as the elder son's son, it was my right, as it was my duty, to be present?"

"We did not know where to send; Frank had forgotten the address, and no one here knew it. We sent off the intimation the moment we discovered your address." She spoke with a curious carefulness, like a child repeating a lesson, and I knew that she lied to me.

"I suppose Frank is the heir," I said questioningly, "or rather, that you are joint heirs together?"

"Yes, Frank has the land and most of the money," she answered slowly. She was quite calm, but very pale.

"Rasper could have told you where I was, had you asked her," I said. "*She* never lost sight of me." Felicia's face changed strangely as I mentioned the faithful old lady's-maid. But she answered at once:

"You don't know then that Rasper quarrelled with her mistress two months ago, and gave notice." This was astounding news—that Rasper, who had been aunt Felicia's maid ever since she was seventeen, should quarrel with her life-long friend and leave her mistress when both were close on seventy, was a thing to wonder at indeed.

"Where on earth is she gone to?" I demanded bluntly.

"I cannot say, I am sure," replied my cousin. "Most likely to her nephew in Cornwall, or her niece in Guernsey."

"It is amazing," I said, still bewildered, "But what was the matter with aunt Felicia? I should think Rasper's leaving must have hastened her death."

"No, indeed, Julian," said Felicia suavely. "It was simple, natural decay, she just faded away from old age."

"But she was not seventy," I persisted; "many women are as hale and vigorous at her age as at yours or mine; she would fret after Rasper I feel sure."

"You are mistaken," said Felicia, drawing herself up frigidly at my clumsy allusion to her age, "But may I ask, Julian, if you have taken a room at the inn or if you mean to stay here to-night? If you stay I must give my orders, of course."

There was no warmth in her tone, and I bitterly regretted I had not thought of this before. But it was too late now to see about lodgings, so I had no alternative.

"Upon my word, Felicia, I forgot," I said, feeling all the time her cold, blue eyes were fixed on me, "but I hope I am not putting you to inconvenience by staying." She did not answer directly; she seemed to be thinking and revolving something in her mind. I was beginning to feel ill at ease when she spoke again.

"Of course it is inconvenient under the circumstances, but as it can't be helped now, there is no use saying anything about it," she remarked coldly. "We dine at half-past seven, so you had better go to your room at once. You will see Frank at dinner." And, touching the bell, she gave her orders, and I found myself following the man upstairs before a single word of apology had entered my mind. The room was not the one I had so often occupied before, it was at the other end of the house, and overlooked the offices behind. My first one had been close to aunt Felicia's bedroom, and had a beautiful view of the woods and the stream, besides being directly

above the lovely old Dutch garden. Still it was a comfortable room, and I dressed and was ready to descend when the gong sounded for dinner. Two people were in the dining-room when I entered—my cousin, Frank Eastwell, and a young lady. I had been prepared to find Frank as unchanged as his sister, but his appearance gave me an unpleasant surprise. He had aged terribly, and not only that, but the marks of a life of dissipation and fast living were plainly stamped upon his once handsome face, in a manner not to be mistaken. He received me in the old half-careless, half-sneering way, without any expression of surprise at the unexpectedness of my visit, and introduced me to the young lady. She was a Miss Hartley—Felicia called her Rachel, and I wondered secretly what had brought her there, whether she was a guest or some sort of companion of Felicia's. They both treated her as though they knew her well, and she addressed them by their christian names.

As we took our places at table, I saw Felicia glance with a frown at the array of wine bottles on the sideboard, and she said something in an undertone to the man who waited. He was proceeding to remove several, when Frank told him savagely to let them alone, and I could not but observe that Felicia bit her lips and grew a shade paler. But she made no remark, and the meal began. Frank talked in a desultory way, now to Miss Hartley, now to me, but his sister ate her dinner in almost entire silence. The meal was well cooked and well served, and if my aunt's cook had left with Rasper and Barnes, her successor evidently knew her business quite as well.

I was seated opposite to Miss Hartley, with my back to the light, so I could look at her unobserved, and I took full advantage of the position. She was neither pretty nor striking in appearance; but the simplicity and sweetness of her expression attracted me. In figure rather *petite*, with dark hair and eyes, she looked about twenty-three. As the dinner progressed, I saw that Frank paid her a good deal of attention, but it struck me that she was rather afraid of him, and more so of Felicia.

The day had been close and sultry, and clearly a storm was brewing, for, reflected in the mirror just opposite me, great banks of clouds with fiery edges, and dull touches of copper here and there, could be seen hovering on the horizon, ready to close in the moment the sun sank. The breathless pause that always precedes a thunder-storm was in the air, not a leaf stirred on the trees, and the birds

had long since retired to the depths of the plantation beyond. Felicia, I remembered, was dreadfully afraid of a storm, and I knew the terror of it was upon her as she addressed Frank pointedly, while I held the door open for her and Miss Hartley to pass out.

"As Julian is here for the evening, I suppose you will not remain long, Frank," she said turning towards him.

"Oh, Julian need be in no hurry, now he is here he can surely stay a day or two," her brother replied half-carelessly; "can't you, Julian?"

I saw the look of anger that darkened Felicia's face; and I saw something more—an eager, entreating glance from Miss Hartley's dark eyes; an almost imperceptible, imploring sign. That decided me, but before I could say a word, Felicia hastily interposed.

"You forget, Frank, Julian cannot stay; he has his employer to consider." She spoke in hard metallic tones.

"I am quite at liberty, Felicia," I rejoined. "So I shall be happy to accept your invitation, Frank."

Felicia was furious; both at her brother for proffering, and at me for accepting the invitation, though she said nothing. Probably she saw as I did, that Frank had taken more than was good for him; for she passed out silently, with her usual haughty grace, evidently not caring to provoke a scene, and I rejoined her brother. But Frank soon rose, saying he was going to see Sims at the lodge. Sims had fallen from a ladder a few days before and had hurt himself. On inquiry I found it was not the old gardener whom I used to know, but his son, a retired soldier, who was head gardener now old Sims was dead. Another of the faithful old servants gone, I commented to myself, as I lit my cigar and strolled out to the wide terrace to smoke it.

The sun had set, and the clouds loomed blacker in the distance, but enough light was left for me to distinguish the well-remembered flower beds, and oddly clipped bushes and shrubs of the garden, as, leaning against the parapet, I looked down upon it. Presently I caught sight of a dark figure flitting among the gathering shadows, and wondered who could choose to be there at such a time. But my idle wonder changed to amazement, when the figure, darting from bush to bush as if dreading observation, came at length close to the wall under the balcony, and I recognised Miss Hartley. Astonishment held me dumb for a moment, and before I could speak she anticipated me.

"Mr. Eastwell, can I see you alone, and at once?" she asked in a trembling agitated voice.

"Of course you can, Miss Hartley," I replied, disguising my surprise as much as possible, and throwing away my cigar, "I am at your service this very moment."

"Not here," she said quickly, "come with me, I know where we can be undisturbed."

I ran down the steps and joined her, and then saw how terribly pale and scared she looked; frightened, I imagined, at fear of the impending thunderstorm. She had wrapped a black lace shawl round her head, and in its sombre folds her face looked ghastly in the strange lurid semi-darkness. She turned and I followed her down to a curious mausoleum-like stone summer-house, that stood at the far end of the garden. It was a damp, cold, slimy sort of place, but she entered it without hesitation, and of course I followed. It was just light enough for us to see each other's faces, though it would soon be quite dark. She turned round the moment we got inside, and laid her hand upon my arm.

"Mr. Eastwell, I do not know you, but I think I can trust you, indeed I *must*! I cannot keep silent any longer; it will kill me," she continued wildly with quivering lips. Her agitation was painful to see. I took the hand she had laid upon my arm, and held it firmly as I answered.

"Indeed you *can* trust me, Miss Hartley. Tell me how I can help you, and be sure I will do it." I saw now that the storm had nothing to do with her terror.

"Mr. Eastwell, can the dead return to haunt the places that they loved in life? Can they make themselves seen or heard by those they cared for?" she asked, her eyes fixed upon mine with feverish anxiety. Now, in my younger days, I had scorned all belief in the supernatural, but in India, China, and Japan, I had seen some very strange things, and had heard of a good many more, so I hesitated how to answer; for now I felt sure the girl had got a fright of some sort. My grand aunt's recent death must have something to do with it, too, I concluded. But she was waiting; I must say something to soothe her.

"I can neither prove nor disprove that, Miss Hartley," I quietly replied. "No one can, I think; but tell me why do you ask."

"Because I have *heard* my guardian since her death, and I know

that Felicia has *seen* her," she answered, her great dark eyes alight with fear.

"Was aunt Felicia your guardian, Miss Hartley?" I questioned in astonishment, "I never knew it."

"I know you did not," she answered softly, "she said she would tell you herself when you came back. You never heard of me, yet I know something of you, for she spoke to me of you."

I was more surprised than I cared to let her see. Who was this girl, and why was my grand-aunt made her guardian? As if divining my thoughts, Miss Hartley went on quietly:

"Papa made Miss Eastwell my guardian jointly with my uncle Ernest. He did not like uncle Ernest's people, so he left me in Miss Eastwell's care until I should reach the age of twenty-five. Hartley Grange is let till then, so I live mostly here. I don't think Felicia likes it, for she is always wanting me to go to uncle Ernest's. I was there when dear Auntie died; they sent for me, but I was too late to see her again alive. I was away too when Rasper left; I think my guardian was never the same after that: she would not have another maid, so Felicia did all she wanted, though I don't think Auntie liked it; she wanted Rasper; it was cruel of Rasper to leave her."

"What was the quarrel about; I cannot understand *why* Rasper should go?" I asked, curious to hear if she could enlighten me as to Rasper's conduct.

"I can't tell you a word about it, Mr. Eastwell. Felicia is so angry when it is spoken about. She told me never to mention it to Auntie, and I never did. Felicia frightens me when she is angry," the girl said quite simply. No wonder she was afraid; I knew what Felicia could be when in a rage.

"When I came back and found dear Auntie dead, it was dreadful," Miss Hartley resumed after a pause. "To be here with Felicia and Frank was horrid. Frank has often been quite tipsy lately, and Felicia has been so cross and queer, she makes me wretched. They are my guardians now, I believe, and I must stay with them, I suppose, but since I heard what I have heard, and saw Felicia's face that time, I feel that if I stay I shall go mad."

She clasped her small hands passionately, the tears of grief and terror streaming down her pale cheeks. I felt that something strange or awful must cause such wild emotion, and I tried to calm her, partly succeeding.

"My dressing-room is next the one Auntie used to have," she continued, "but it is in another passage altogether, in the same one as Felicia's, though not next to hers. On the night I came home from Stanton, I was in that room to see that Ellis had unpacked my things properly, and I sat down, for I was tired. I was thinking of Auntie, and wishing I had been in time to see her alive, when all of a sudden I heard through the wall between our rooms the sound of moaning, just such moaning as Auntie's when she was distressed or in pain. At first I forgot about her death and listened, but the moans stopped, and then I remembered, and ran out of the room, for I was frightened to stay. I could not sleep at night, though I did not tell Felicia then, not till after. But I heard the moans last night, after the funeral was over and all the people gone, so I told Felicia, and she was even more frightened than I was, though she insisted it was fancy. She changed my room at once, but that did not make me forget, and something else helped me to remember even better. I could not sleep last night, I was restless with excitement, and Frank kept me talking in the library till very late. It was almost twelve when I went up to my room; Felicia had gone up some time before me, and I heard the clock strike as I went along the passage to my new room. I turned to look back, and as I did so, Felicia came running out from the one leading to Auntie's rooms, with such a ghastly face that I felt frozen with horror. She shut and locked the door, and leant against the wall panting. When I could, I went to her to see if I could help her, and she was like a mad woman; her eyes rolling, her teeth chattering, as she repeated over and over, not seeing me, 'The face of the dead,' 'The face of the dead.' When she turned and saw me she was furious. She sprang at me, and shook me till it hurt, and had Frank not come up just then, I don't know what she might have done. He was angry with her, and went himself with me to the door of my room. She said something this morning about having got a fright; and I *know* she had seen Auntie, just as I had heard her. Before you came to-day, when dressing for dinner, I went to my old room for my jewel-case, and I heard the moans again. Oh! Mr. Eastwell! can it be that Auntie's spirit haunts the rooms she used when she was alive? can she have left something undone here—something she would fain set right, though it is too late?"

The sweet earnest voice ceased; it was too dark now to see, but I

felt she was trying to read my face—that her eyes were straining in the gloom to see it. I was just on the point of comforting her as best I could, when a vivid blue glare suddenly lit up the old summer-house, while a deafening crash of thunder seemed to fall upon its very roof. The storm was upon us; in a minute we seemed to be standing in the middle of a sea of living fire, as the glare of the lightning darted its forked tongues around us. The thunder was one fearful roll and crash, never silent for a single moment. And then came the roar of the rain beating upon the roof, and the clash and clamour of the trees, tossed violently against each other. The weird light showed me Miss Hartley crouching on the moss-covered floor, her face hidden in her hands, and her long dark hair falling in disorder around her. I lifted her up and drew her into the corner farthest from the door, and held her firmly there with one hand, and so we remained for such a length of time, that it seemed to me it must be near day-break before that fearful commotion of the elements lessened. At last it did begin to slacken. The peals became less frequent and more distant. The lightning was not so vivid, with a longer interval between the flashes; and the rain, though still heavy, was not the fierce downpour it had been. When I looked out, I could see that, though most of the windows of the Court were dark, a few still had lights; so I proposed we should make a rush for it and gain an entrance by the window of the dining-room opening upon the terrace. My companion raised no objection, so still holding her to steady her steps, we ran by the nearest way to the terrace stair, and entered the room I had quitted more than three hours before.

CHAPTER II.

A DEATH-LIKE stillness reigned in the house. Where was Felicia? Surely Frank had returned? My perplexity was reflected in Miss Hartley's face.

"Where can they all be? Are there no servants?" I asked, as I lowered the smoking lamp in the blackened globe, where it must have flared for hours.

"There are very few, I believe," she answered. "Most of the servants refused to remain with Felicia, and their places are not yet

filled ; but Atkins the new butler, Mrs. Marsh the new cook, and Ellis the housemaid ought to be about. Perhaps they are frightened."

"Very likely," I said. "And just as likely Felicia and Frank are in the drawing-room. Let us go and see."

But the stately, old-fashioned room which I remembered so well was empty. The blinds were not drawn, and a faint twilight, just enough to make things visible, prevailed. The room looked solemn and ghostly, and Miss Hartley came nearer to me, and I heard her draw a shivering breath.

"Don't let us wait here," I said cheerfully. "Probably they are in Frank's room ; Felicia is afraid of thunder."

We went into the passage, where a light burnt on a bracket, and I led the way to Frank's room. But here too all was deserted ; the room was in disorder, he had not been in it since he dressed for dinner. Miss Hartley sat down dejectedly upon a settee, and I was just going to propose a visit to Felicia's quarters, when the swish of trailing garments coming from the passage outside fell upon my ears. Making a sign to my companion to remain still, I opened the door softly and looked out, just in time to see a tall woman in a blue dressing-gown disappearing round the corner through the curtained doorway. Without thinking, I at once stole down to the curtain ; the stealthy, gliding motion of the woman filled me with suspicion, for who would creep along like that, and at such an hour, if their purpose were a good one ? The heavy curtain was not entirely drawn back, and by standing close to the wall, I could see the opposite door and curtain, the entrance to my grand-aunt's apartments, without being seen. The woman had just reached the door when I saw her. She held a small lamp in one hand, in the other a basket with a lid over it ; but setting both down, she took from an inner pocket a bunch of keys, and fitting one in the lock, she turned it with some difficulty. Pushing the door cautiously open, she stooped for her lamp and basket, and as she did so, to my intense amazement I recognised my cousin Felicia. The sight of her *there* caused me actually to recoil, and as I fell back a pace I found Rachel Hartley just behind me. We gazed in dumb consternation at each other ; and heard Felicia locking the door behind her, which told us we could not follow her, even if we wished.

What was she ~~doing~~ doing there ? What could take her to those silent, deserted rooms at midnight ? I saw the question in my companion's

face, and as I read it, a wild, a horrible idea darted through my mind; an idea, the very thought of which turned me sick and faint. I fell back against the wall, cold drops of moisture gathering on my brow, my heart beating violently, while Rachel gazed into my face speechless, but the girl saw and *understood*. Without one word being spoken between us, she uttered a low, sobbing cry. "Oh! not that! not that!" and then stood, her hands clasped over mine, her dark eyes wide with horror and anguish, but perfectly calm; ready for any emergency. She was the calmer of the two just then.

I had small time to form any plan of action; at any moment Felicia might return; she had more than a woman's strength, I must take her unawares before she could summon Frank to her assistance. Miss Hartley was quite ready for anything I might tell her to do, and she fully realised that we must be prompt. Taking her lace shawl, I told her in a few hurried whispers what I wanted, and motioning that she understood, she drew into the corner, concealed by the curtain, while I stood, shawl in hand, on the other side. And so we waited for quite half an hour, hearing nothing but the shutting of a distant door in a remote part of the house.

The storm had spent itself; both rain and wind had ceased. At last, the faint click of a door being locked in the closed passage, could be heard, and we braced ourselves for the coming scene. We could hear the faint rustle of her skirt as she neared the door, and she seemed to pause for a moment, as though to listen if all was quiet before she came out. Then the door was unlocked and pulled slowly back, and Felicia stepped noiselessly out between us. Her lamp had been extinguished, but I could see in the dim light that she was deadly pale and trembled; she could have put her hand upon either of us, but we were well hidden.

Before she could turn round to close the door, I threw the black lace over her face and seized her hands; and Rachel glided swiftly behind, pushed the door to the wall and removed the keys, putting the bunch in my coat pocket. Felicia uttered a suppressed cry, and struggled hard to free herself from my grasp, and as soon as I felt the keys dropped into my pocket I released her. She snatched the shawl from her head, and, as she met my look, staggered back as though to seize the door handle, but almost fell, the door being wide open. Then she saw Miss Hartley, and the guilty, baffled look that crossed her face, I hope I may never see again. There was *murder*

and worse in the cold, blue eyes that turned from Rachel Hartley to me: she knew that the game was played out, that she had lost, but the indomitable pride of the woman bore her up, even amid the shame and agony of discovered guilt. She looked at me fixedly as I addressed her.

"Come with me, Felicia; I will see you safely into your own room, and safe from *yourself*, before I look into the awful secret you have hidden behind that door," I said calmly. "Miss Hartley, will you show me Miss Eastwell's room?"

Not a word did Felicia answer as Rachel stepped forward. I simply signed to her to move, and she turned back with me along the way she had come. Miss Hartley shivered, and her tears fell as I secured Felicia to a chair with the sheets torn into strips. She was as helpless in that chair as though in a prison cell, more so indeed. When she was firmly secured, I told her that as soon as I had made sure of her brother, I should return to see what she had to say, and we left her staring straight before her, locking the door after us.

We went down to the great hall, and listened again for any sound of life from the other inmates of the Court, but, as before, all was silent. I proposed we should look for Frank in the library or smoking room, and we were on the point of doing so, when the sound of a knock upon the closed outer door fell upon our ears. It startled us both, coming at such an hour, and while we were passing through such a crisis; but I knew it must mean something of consequence when the knocker was used in the dead of night, so I hastened to unfasten the heavy door, and throw it wide open. Two men stood in the shadow of the portico; I could but dimly see them. One was very tall, the other short, both seemed young. The tall one spoke:

"Is there anyone here who will help us with the master? He has met with an accident from the lightning. Can you send some of the servants to help to carry him up?"

Rachel gave a slight scream.

"Where is he, and how did it happen?" I enquired. "And who are you?"

"I am Sims, sir. Mr. Eastwell came to the lodge to ask how my arm was; I broke it a few days ago. He would not wait until the storm was over, he said Miss Eastwell would be frightened, so he started off with Dan as soon as the rain slackened. In the avenue a bright flash almost took Dan's sight away, and when he

looked round, the master was lying under the trees, and did not move. Dan could not lift him alone, and he came back for me. I am useless, sir, as you see, and Dan is but a lad; we need help to fetch him home. I fear the worst, sir."

The man was a good talker; I rather liked him. But something told me his fears were well founded. At that moment I saw the face of Atkins, the new butler, behind Miss Hartley; he had evidently heard at last, and came forward to see what was the matter. There was no time for talking or explanation; Miss Hartley went at once to get the women to prepare Frank's room, and I started with Atkins and Sims to fetch their master home, sending the lad off for the doctor.

The moment I saw Frank's face by the light of the lantern Sims carried, I knew he was past all human aid, and the men knew it too. He was lying under a huge elm, whose trunk, split right in two, was charred and black. The ground, too, was, for some distance, torn up, showing plainly the track of the fatal flash, and Frank's hair and beard had been singed. We carried him reverently to the house, but though we undressed him, and tried every means to restore consciousness, we knew it was a vain task, and by and by desisted. Then I remembered Miss Hartley, and leaving the other men and the housekeeper in Frank's room, I went in search of her.

I crossed the wide, upper hall, and went straight down the long passage towards Aunt Felicia's apartments. A light shone from under the door of the one that had been her bedroom, and I paused there; but not long. Softly turning the handle I looked in, and almost cried out, though what I saw was only what I expected to see. On the bed, close to the wall, lay the figure of a woman, apparently asleep, her face hidden in the shade of the heavy velvet curtain, while kneeling by the side of the bed, her face buried in her hands, was Rachel Hartley.

The room was filled with a curious, sickly odour, which seemed familiar to me, though I could not at once recall where I had smelt it before. Rachel did not move as I crossed the room to her side, nor even look up when I touched her shoulder. I put back the curtain that hid the occupant of the bed, and an involuntary cry escaped me, for I was looking down upon the sleeping face of my grand-aunt Felicia.

I stood for a moment staring blankly at her, then as Rachel did

not move, and the close, sickening, perfumed air was affecting me strangely, I went to the shuttered window and tried to unbar it, but there was a padlock on the bar which resisted all my efforts. Then I remembered the keys in my pocket, and sure enough the key of the padlock was there. I threw the sash wide, letting in a rush of cool, delicious air, and turned again to Rachel. Evidently she had fainted, so I carried her to the window. She had been overcome by that peculiar odour, whose effects I myself had felt, and soon revived, and sat up, smiling faintly, saying she was better. We went back to the bedside together.

"Thank heaven we found this out," she said solemnly, laying her hand on my grand-aunt's forehead. "How strange—how very strange it is, and we thought her dead. How could they be so cruel? *What* made them do it?"

"I think I know," I answered gravely. "But we shall get all the truth from Felicia, now that Frank is gone; she will be utterly broken by his death, for she was devoted to him. The doctor can do Frank no good. I shall ask him to come here, for I recognise this queer perfume now. It is scented opium, and Aunt Felicia is under its influence: she will sleep it off by and bye. Will you come with me to see if the doctor has arrived?"

She preferred to remain; so knowing there was now no danger, as the room was almost clear of the heavy fumes, I saw her comfortably settled in an easy chair, with the fresh air blowing into the room, and went off to see if Dr. Herbert had come.

It was not Dr. Herbert, however, but a stranger who I found awaiting me in Frank's room. He introduced himself as Dr. Gordon, the doctor's late assistant and successor, and we left the room together, after he had assured us that my cousin had been instantaneously killed by the electric fluid.

"But I don't understand you, Mr. Eastwell," he said, after I had explained what I wanted. "The lady you speak of was certainly under my care; but she died last week. I attended her funeral yesterday, and heard her will read. The poor fellow lying in the room we have just left was her heir; he and his sister got all she had."

"I know you are telling me what you believe is the truth, and what others would tell me too," I answered. "There has been some strange fraud practised, Dr. Gordon. Come with me, I en-

treat you ; you may be able to help me unravel a dark mystery. My cousin Frank is dead ; I am his heir-at-law, and I want to preserve the family honour. You medical men come across strange things I know, and often hold in your hands clues which might bring men to the gallows, if their relatives gave the word. But the culprit in this case is a woman, and both for her own sake and that of her intended victim, I wish to spare her."

The doctor held out his hand impulsively.

"I will do all I can to help you, Mr. Eastwell ; you may trust me," he said earnestly, and I saw he meant what he said.

I took him straight to my aunt's room, telling him on the way what I had done with Felicia, and that as yet she did not know that Frank was dead.

"This is not the lady I attended, whose death certificate I signed," Dr. Gordon remarked, as he gazed down at Aunt Felicia ; and for the moment I felt completely baffled. "The lady I understood to be Miss Eastwell was certainly old, but her complexion was darker, and her hair not so streaked with grey."

"Rasper!" Miss Hartley and I cried in a breath, and Dr. Gordon was evidently surprised at our exclamation. He could have known nothing of Rasper, we remembered.

"What was the illness she died of?" I asked.

"Paralysis at first, then gradual but natural decay," he answered. "She could neither speak nor move after the first shock, and just grew weaker and weaker. But I remember now, she used to look uneasy when I called her Miss Eastwell, and her eyes seemed to follow Miss Felicia in an imploring way, when she heard me use that name."

Poor Rasper! Light was dawning upon me already: I only needed a little help from Felicia. What a clever, unscrupulous schemer she was!

"Rasper was my aunt's faithful old attendant," I said. "She, being helpless and unable to explain the truth to you, the plot once laid was easily carried out. How they meant to manage when the *real* Miss Eastwell died is a mystery to me. Felicia would no doubt have arranged that, as she did all the rest, I feel sure. I hope Dr. Gordon that she was kind to poor old Rasper?"

"I think she was," he answered, "she did not need nursing, excepting that she required to be watched now and then. She

slept almost continuously for the last few weeks, and passed away in her sleep."

So poor Rasper's end had been a peaceful one: I was glad of that at any rate.

"Your guardian will not die, Miss Hartley," said the doctor kindly, seeing Rachel's deep distress. "She has been kept in a semi-conscious state for some time, but once thoroughly rid of these fumes, she will soon get all right, never fear."

Then I told him about Felicia, and he fully understood the plot my cousin had laid. We left Rachel watching by my aunt, and went to see my wretched cousin, Dr. Gordon, at my request, undertaking to tell her of Frank's death. The grey dawn was breaking as we entered her room; and she took no notice whatever of our presence until he spoke. As I had anticipated, she was like a mad creature when she took in the sense of what he said, and knew that Frank was dead. To my amazement I discovered that my cold, self-contained cousin had once loved me, learnt for the first time, that a light, boyish speech of mine, long since forgotten, and remembered now with shame, had turned that passionate love to as passionate hate. But with Frank's death had gone all wish to dissemble, all desire to live, and when she grew calm enough to speak coherently, the whole of her scheme, of her guilt, was told as quietly as though nothing could matter any more in this world; as indeed it could not to *her* at least, poor soul.

Frank had told her that unless a certain sum was forthcoming by a date only a few weeks distant, he should be utterly ruined and disgraced. She was in despair; but that very night aunt Felicia had found fault with Rasper, and the old lady's maid had retired in anger from her mistress's presence. Aunt Felicia had a cold, and remained in bed. Next morning Rasper did not appear, and Felicia found her lying on the floor of her room, speechless and motionless, from a shock of paralysis. Rachel was away at her uncle's; Dr. Herbert was ill, and would probably never be able to attend again; his assistant was a stranger. Fate seemed to play into Felicia's hand.

From that hour her plans were skilfully laid, and as easily carried out, for not only was Rasper past all power of resistance, but aunt Felicia, deprived of the company and tendance of her faithful maid, drooped more and more. Felicia found it all very easy; she kept

Rachel away, but, not until she had got her plot fairly working, did she tell her brother. At first he had been tractable, but latterly he had felt deep remorse, especially as the man, who had held him in his power, had died suddenly and so freed him. Finding that Felicia had gone too far to draw back, he had taken to drinking heavily, and she had lived in daily dread of his betraying her. My coming was another terror, and she had suffered tortures of guilty fear. She had paid her visits to her captive easily enough until Rachel came home, after which she made them at night when the girl had retired. The storm had frightened her, she had waited till it was over, thinking Rachel safe in her room, and Frank and I together.

There is not much more to tell of this strange story. My grand-aunt under Dr. Gordon's skilful treatment entirely recovered, and showed such joy on seeing me, that I knew I had never lost my place in her heart. There was of course some sensation caused by the supposed death, but though it was known that Felicia had brought herself within reach of the law, no action was taken. Frank's tragic end too helped to shield her. Dr. Gordon and I, ably assisted by Sir John Bridges, got her quietly away to France, and safely within convent walls before the real facts of the case leaked out, and as aunt Felicia flatly refused to prosecute, or even to speak of her own pretended death, the nine days' wonder as usual soon subsided.

She still survives, a hale old woman of seventy-six, and is a great grand-aunt, for Rachel and I have been married some years. Baldwin's Court echoes to the merry voices of children and the patter of little feet. We all live there together, the Grange being leased to Sir John Bridges. We sometimes hear of Felicia, in her Convent of Sainte Thérèse, from Sir John. She is very devout, and much given to prayer and fasting. Aunt Felicia, Rachel and I are too happy ourselves to bear malice; she has long ago been forgiven by us for the crime that failed.

Unto Him Fourfold.

By MURIEL C. LINDSAY,

Author of "CHERRY BLOSSOM," "MY MODEL," "MY CHUM,"
etc., etc.

THERE was a sharp tinge of frost in the air ; early in the afternoon snow had fallen, clothing the City for a brief spell in a mantle of dazzling whiteness, but now it was trodden under foot into grime and slush, making the pavements and roads wet and slippery.

A feeble moon could be seen, but its pale, wan light was entirely lost and swallowed up by the glare and glitter of the London streets.

As he sailed on the morrow, John Forsythe was giving a parting dinner to a few old cronies ; and now walked leisurely to his club, where they were to meet. His reflections were not unpleasant. Adventure he craved for ; the thought of rustling for his living stirred his blood pleasantly ; he was rather pugnacious by nature, and whatever he took in hand, he stuck to it until he carried it out.

And it was just as well that he was going : the old place was not the same since the Guv'nor departed, and Carrington was not all one cared for in an elder brother.

He reached the club steps, and was about to enter, when a tiny figure darted in front of him, and a small grimy fist held out a paper ; a thin voice piped plaintively :

"Buy a pyper, sir ? Oh, do, sir ; I ain't 'ad no luck this dy, an' if yer would——"

A pair of great grey eyes gazed up at him from under a tangle of red hair, and the little face was pinched and blue from hunger and cold.

"No luck, eh ?" said John kindly, taking the paper from the rough bleeding hand, raw from chaps. "Poor little soul, you look hungry. Here, take this and get a good feed with it, and get something too, to keep you warm."

"This," was a half-sovereign, and the child's eyes seemed to start out of her head with wonder at the unexpected gift. John laughed amusedly at her astonishment.

"There, go along," he said, giving her a good-natured push, and, as she began to slowly move away, she heard him greeted by name by a couple of men, and then they disappeared into the building.

With the gold firmly clutched in her paw, she made her way to the nearest coffee palace, picking up a "pal" on the road, and together they had a meal, such as they'd never eaten in their lives before. And in her after life, nothing ever tasted exactly so good as this unlooked for dinner did, to the lonely waif of the streets.

Forsythe's friends insisted on knowing upon what he was so busily engaged that he did not notice their approach: and their chaff was plentiful when he confessed his philanthropic act.

"Bread upon the waters, Forsythe," said one, "look out for its return after many days," he added jestingly.

John laughed and shook his head.

"No fear, old man, it's only in Sunday-school books that the hero's good deeds are rewarded; in real life they are speedily forgotten."

The next day he sailed, and it was many years before London saw him again.

* * * *

Ten long years came and went, and once more John Forsythe walked upon the asphalt of London, no longer plain John Forsythe, but, by a series of events, Earl of Carringford.

Having been singularly lucky in all his ventures, he was now a very rich man, and on the death of his brother in the hunting field, had returned home after a prolonged tour, to succeed to the title and what was left of the estates.

Most of the land once owned by the Carringfords had been sold or mortgaged by his dissipated elder, and his first act was to buy back as much as he could, and to restore the old Court to something of its former splendour, and to find a suitable mistress to grace his home.

In spite of the encouragement given to a wealthy man, and an earl to boot, John had, up to the present, remained placidly heart-whole, and saw every prospect of so remaining, as he had seen no woman yet who made his pulses beat any the faster for her sake, and he had come to the conclusion that he had better take the first who presented herself, and trust to luck.

As he strolled down to his old club, where he was to meet the same men with whom he had spent his last evening ten years ago,

his mind went back to the little beggar, to whom he had proved such a Santa Clause, and he wondered absently what had become of her.

And curiously enough it was recalled to him again later in the evening, by one of the men who had witnessed the affair.

"I suppose she's dead," said Carringford indifferently in answer to the question, "or lived to swell the ranks of the unfortunate sisterhood," he added with a sigh.

After dinner they adjourned to the theatre. The play was a modern "problem" one, a new fashion since John went away, and but for the acting had no special attraction.

The leading lady, Nathalie Ross, was one of the most beautiful women of the day, famed alike for her Titian-coloured hair, and the absolute blamelessness and purity of her life. No breath of scandal had tainted her fair name, and she was known to be a brilliant and hard-working woman.

At the finish, Carringford, who had been strangely moved at the sight of the lovely creature on the stage, made his way behind, and asked for an introduction. He fancied she grew a trifle pale, and that her dark eyes sought his in a somewhat startled manner, but as there was no trace of embarrassment in her graciousness towards him, he concluded he was mistaken.

Nathalie asked him to call, and soon it came about, that few days passed when he did not visit the tiny flat. London wondered, then laughed and said that after all she was no better than the rest of them, and that it had known all along her virtue was only assumed.

For sometime neither heard the rumours about them, but continued their friendship tranquilly enough, although to Carringford the wish for more than friendship was becoming stronger every day: but it was not until a sneer and a low expression coupled with Nathalie's name was uttered in his presence, that he determined to speak.

His action was simplicity itself. After knocking the man down, he turned to the assemblage, saying in grave, even tones:

"I have done this, because that cur insulted the fair fame of an innocent woman, whom I intend to ask to do me the honour of becoming my wife."

News of all kinds flies apace, and when he called the next morning Nathalie knew about his defence of her.

"Oh, why did you do it?" she cried, her eyes full of unshed tears. "What does it matter what they say of me? I am only an actress, you know, and not worth fighting over."

She seized his hands with her warm impulsive ones, and would have raised them to her lips, had he not prevented her.

"No, no," he said hastily, "don't do that. Nathalie, I love you, give me the right to defend you always—be my dear wife."

The colour flamed high in her cheeks, and her lips quivered.

"You love me, you wish me to be your wife? You? Ah, this is wonderful."

"What is?" he queried, laughing, drawing her to him, "that I should love you?"

"Yes," she said gravely; "listen to what I have to tell you, and then—. Ten years ago on a cold winter's night, do you remember giving a gold piece to a little ragged, half-starved girl?"

He nodded. "Yes, I do, but how does that concern you?" he asked.

"In this way, I was that little girl, I and no other. I was a friendless little waif, and your money was the first kind action I had ever received in my short life. Small wonder that I remembered, and hearing your name, treasured it up in my heart. With that gold I laid the foundations of my present position. A small pantomime engagement led to others, and slowly and surely I worked my way up. Oh, it has been hard, and I have been sorely tempted many a time, for I am beautiful, I know, but you were before me like a guiding-star, and I kept myself what I knew you would have me be; I have waited for you, I am yours, do with me what you will."

His arms closed round her, and as their lips met, she heard him whisper, "My wife!"

The Song of the Sword.

I've carved my way to fortune and fame
On many a well-fought field ;
Tho' foes were many, and odds were great,
And comrades the victims of hapless fate :
I was never known to yield.

I was ever the first in the thickest fight,
When death was marking its own ;
When my master's hand was aching and sore,
And my blade was dripping with ruby gore,
As I turned brave hearts to stone.

My sweep is broad, my tooth is keen :
Biting thro' casque and mail ;
And sparkles flash from my naked blade,
As many foes in the dust are laid,
When bullets fall like hail.

I've fought for freedom and fatherland,
For honour, love, and right ;
To avenge the oppressed, and succour the weak,
To uphold the poor, and support the meek,
Was ever my noblest fight.

And now I am old and dinted and worn,
With bloodstains on my blade,
And I lie in repose in my rusted sheath,
With a record of honour underneath,
And of glories that cannot fade.

GERALD HAYWARD.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

"Mon âme a erré comme dans un paradis de rêveries."

"Il n'y a pas d'isolement pour qui sait prendre sa place dans l'harmonie universelle et ouvrir son âme à toutes les impressions de cette harmonie."

M. DE GUERIN.

DURING the next few years the mode of life at Godwin's Rest went on uneventfully enough. Every day May and Henrietta took a walk with their nurse, or else rode out, turn and turn about, on their small Shetland pony. A visit to the village general shop constituted their greatest treat. Henrietta loved the very smell of that small front room, with its uneven brick floor: a smell made up of bacon, tallow dips, coffee and groceries of all sorts. The great scales standing on the counter were always interesting, and the smaller pair hanging from a beam in the low rafted ceiling proved even more inviting, for in them were measured out the pear drops, and barley sugar fishes bought at long intervals: or the great red and yellow striped pincushions, and peppermints, more often purchased by Sophie for her own eating. They were good for the indigestion, but not for children she would say; and what the indigestion might be Henrietta could never make out.

In Mrs. Reay's shop the space was so narrow between the counter and the wall, that no two people could pass each other, or turn round: and the solemn procession thus necessitated, in and out, formed another source of pleasure. But the shop behind was large, and the passage opened into an inner room, where calico and wonderfully patterned neckerchiefs were sold. Here the children never went, though an inner door sometimes left ajar permitted glimpses of this seemingly mysterious region.

Mrs. Reay's black cap, adorned with purple flowers, nodding over a rubicund brow, had a certain good-natured rakishness in its set, corresponding with Mrs. Reay's own manners. "Me and my husband

always tops up with a glass of brandy and water at nights, it's good for the indigestion," she would remark. Here was another remedy suited to the mysterious ailment; but the children never coveted the brandy and water, only the peppermints.

Next to their shopping expeditions they loved visiting a small cottage—a tiny moss-covered building set down in the park adjoining the Chase, where lived an old lady's-maid of their grandmother's. Mrs. Dover had once been a village beauty, and had married the blacksmith on the Godwin estate. She was a sweet faced woman still: white haired and blue eyed, with a gentle dignity of manner that would not have disgraced a duchess. Her voice was never raised; her serenity never ruffled; and she was always ready with a welcome for her master's grandchildren.

To go here; to escape from Sophie, to race down the long rides of cherry trees while the poor *bonne*, like panting time, toiled vainly in the rear; this was a favourite pastime with the children. The very flowers in Mrs. Dover's garden were surely sweeter than those at Godwin's Rest. Musk grew here in profusion, and giant honeysuckle, and cabbage, and moss-roses, and lad's-love, and bachelor's-buttons, and old fashioned clove pinks, and sweet peas, and great white annunciation lilies, with their golden crowns of pollen, making a confusion of sweets. And in the parlour stood a corner cupboard, with hideous Chinese mandarins nodding upon it. And inside on the shelves were wide mouthed green glasses; and sometimes in the hot weather, the children would have a taste of Mrs. Dover's home-made wine—ginger, or elderberry, or real metheglin, brewed from virgin honey, with no headache in it, the kind old dame averred: but this last treat came rarely. At every visit refreshment was offered, but the children always looked at their nurse, regulating their answers by her nod or shake of the head; and alas more often than not Sophie made a negative signal. Still, there was always the delightful possibility that she might nod an affirmative.

Then Mrs. Dover distilled elder flowers, over a slow fire built on the hearth in the back kitchen: and the steam trickling in tears of pure elder into a bottle, the fire with its clouds of sparks, and the old-fashioned bellows were all sources of fascination not to be found at home.

Once a year, too, on the children's birthday, they went to tea

under the shade of a giant elm just outside the cottage, and discussed clotted cream like two kittens. Here, not twenty yards from the elm tree, hummed the machinery of a water saw-mill; and a delicious fall, green and quivering, shot over the brow of the chalk, rushing along in a foaming cascade, down which "slide" many fleets of walnut-shell boats danced gaily to death.

Yes, the park held a store-house of delight for the children, from the first days in spring when they used to look up with unavailing covetousness at the drifted snow of bloom on the cherry trees (planted long centuries before by dead and gone monks), to the time, when grown taller, they could just reach the boughs, and pick off the mossed and netted acorn cups from the foreign oaks, transplanted here a hundred years ago by their own great-grandfather.

As the children grew older, walks and rides became supplemented with lessons. Mrs. Godwin objected to a resident governess, and was fortunate in securing the services of two maiden ladies, in somewhat reduced circumstances, who lived within five minutes walk of Godwin's Rest, in a tiny cottage called the Nutshell.

The Misses Swann were sisters, daughters of a clergyman. Their father, being in delicate health, had held a foreign chaplaincy during the latter years of his life, but before then he had been for a long time the rector of Godwin's Worthy, and much beloved. At his death it seemed only natural that the Misses Swann should return to their native place, and eke out their income by teaching. In the village they were as much a part of the reigning institutions as the clerk, or the old postman.

Drusilla, the elder sister, cared little for books. True, in her girlish days she had dutifully ploughed in the wake of her father through much astronomy and more Latin: but music or modern languages held no attractions for her. She took an innocent pride in the accomplishment of her more talented sister, whose education had been completed at a first-class school in Paris, and whose musical gifts were of an exceptionally high order.

The village said that Miss Swann was a well-informed woman. She never took the Pleiades for Orion, or enquired after the position of the "middle-sized," or "polar bear" like some of her less learned neighbours. No, Miss Swann made none of these mistakes, though on matters of etiquette her ideas were peculiar. She never allowed man about the place, saying that it would be an indecorous ar-

rangement. Being one of the strong ones of the earth, she managed the small plot of ground at the back of the house on a plan of her own devising: hoeing potatoes, picking peas, and pulling radishes very contentedly; only assisted, under protest, in the heavy digging by the village clerk, who made his appearance by stealth, at Miss Lavender's private order, on those days when Miss Drusilla went to the country town to do necessary shopping.

Indoors Miss Swann also reigned supreme: washing up the breakfast china, dusting her own room, and watching over the one maid servant with the eye of a hawk. And when Miss Lavender would fain have helped in these household matters, Miss Drusilla always said, "No, my dear: such work is not for your fingers. Go out into the front garden and look after your roses."

But it must not be imagined that Miss Lavender was an idle person. She did more than see to the flowers in the front garden. Five days out of six, May and Henrietta were her pupils; and in the evening, she was never too tired to read the paper aloud, while Miss Swan cut out garments for the village clothing club, or sorted the books for the lending library. Miss Swann also managed the coal club, priding herself on keeping the books by double entry. With the children's lessons she gave some small help—a daily half-hour with the Latin grammar, and the rudiments of astronomy; but a sigh of relief always escaped her when this portion of the morning's work was safely accomplished.

Henrietta loved both her governesses, and never made fun of them behind their backs. Child though she might be, her instinctive reverence turned already to everything beautiful; and a quick eye could not fail to be struck by the mutual devotion of the two sisters; a devotion which no little oddities could tarnish.

May could never persuade Henrietta to tie on a "duster cap," in imitation of Miss Swann on cleaning days; or to hoe imaginary potatoes, followed by a family of imaginary ducks, waiting for worms. Some people never see anything but the ludicrous side of life, missing the tenderer half tones altogether.

Still it must be confessed that in appearance Miss Swann was not quite like other people. Two rows of grey curls hung down on either side of her rosy wrinkled cheeks. A coronet of hair, plaited rather thin, made a kind of open work circle round her head; the whole structure being kept in place by a tortoise-shell comb,

backed by a bow of ribbon. Her Sunday gown and bonnet were always of black silk; but in the week days, and more particularly in the mornings, her fancy ran riot. Her print dresses would have startled anyone not used to them, for the enormous patterns, and bunches, on her brightly flowered dimity were unique. To see her thus clad, with "jingling keys" at her girdle, produced a sort of fascination on Henrietta's mind: indeed, not only Miss Swann but the whole place seemed possessed of a certain quaintness, from the green baise blinds always draped over the clean paint of the yellow hall door, to the grooming of a tiny Shetland pony, yclept "Mary Anne," at whose toilette Henrietta sometimes surreptitiously assisted.

In vain had Miss Lavender suggested keeping a small boy for the pony: Miss Drusilla shook her head and said a boy would grow up in time, and such an arrangement could not be contemplated. In these matters Miss Lavender always gave way, for she was fifteen years younger than Miss Drusilla.

In appearance there was as much difference between the two sisters as in the burr of a chestnut and its fruit. Miss Lavender's rippling brown hair, untinged with grey, was turned off a pretty forehead, and coiled, low in her neck. In the morning her head was uncovered, but in the afternoon she generally wore lace lappets that had belonged to her grandmother; and this old-fashioned head dress, together with the sapphire ring, always on her left hand, had a certain fascination for other people besides Henrietta.

Some years ago on her return from abroad, Miss Lavender had been first governess, and then companion to Lady Evelyn Lisle; and during her stay at the Grange, had won not only the heart of her pupil, but, what was far more serious, had secured the affections of Maurice Lisle as well. Although the Duchess would not hear of an engagement, oddly enough the old Duke countenanced it. Perhaps he thought that his son's love for the pretty, gentle rector's daughter might prove a talisman to rather a wild nature. Perhaps he fancied that time and absence might cool this sudden passion—the young man's regiment being under orders for foreign service—and possibly he was anxious to retain a really first-rate governess for his head-strong little daughter. However this may have been, the affair ended sadly enough. Maurice fell, shot in the trenches before Sebastopol, within a year of his departure, and

nothing remained to Miss Lavender but a little packet of letters, and the ring that she always wore.

After the completion of her pupil's education she came home to the Nutshell, and had remained there ever since.

People with their usual wisdom declared that Miss Drusilla spoiled her younger sister ; they also remarked that Miss Lavender recovered from her trouble very quickly.

She never asked for the sympathy of the outside world, and went about among her poorer neighbours, much as usual.

Once a fortnight, in the warm summer weather, the sisters dined at the Chase ; the shaggy Shetland pony taking them there and back. They never stayed later than half-past nine o'clock, because Miss Drusilla feared that the night air might prove injurious to Mary Anne's precious constitution ; and this whim was humoured by Miss Lavender, though the health of the pony might have been likened to granite in its composition.

Once a fortnight Lady Evelyn went to tea at the Nutshell, and on these occasions Miss Swann gloried in the production of early radishes, or watercress ; but she would have felt genuine dismay had the lady of the manor complimented her on her gardening, or found out that "Lavvy's sister" washed up the tea things. It was only as "Lavvy's sister" that she minded, and she could never be brought to see that Miss Lavender did not mind at all. Lady Evelyn knew this, and if when calling, she caught a glimpse of a figure amongst the weeds in the onion bed, she always took a chair facing away from the back window, with the most unconscious air in the world.

"Did Lady Evelyn see me?" Miss Swann would ask anxiously afterwards : and Miss Lavender would truthfully answer : "No, I am sure she didn't, but it wouldn't have mattered, Drusie."

"Oh, yes, sweet Lavender, it would," Miss Swann always said : "not to you, perhaps, you can do anything ; but I cannot be too particular for your sake."

The two sisters were very happy together, and happy also in their family possessions. Their exquisite china and glass, inherited from a great-grandmother, stirred even Mrs. Godwin's envy. Their race of white Persian cats seemed as well known in the place, and almost as famous as the Duke's prize orchids. And May and Henrietta's greatest treat sometimes took the shape of an invitation to drink tea

out of the old Rockingham china, and to romp with the cats, "Muff," and "Tiny."

Yes, the Misses Swann were a contented pair of sisters, despite their small means, and Miss Lavender's very feeble health.

Still there were times when midsummer came, and the water-lilies were in bloom on the lake at the Grange: when the tall stocks gave their sweet smell in the little front garden, and the musk carnations needed tying up, and the eleventh Sunday in Trinity came round—the date when Maurice sailed, and the two had parted from each other—there were days when there still came a look in the younger sister's eyes that gave Miss Swann a heart-ache.

It was then that Miss Lavender always felt the heat, and the children had their summer holidays; and Miss Drusilla used to go about the house softly, always knowing by intuition when the bedroom door was locked. And after such days were over, Miss Lavender would look at the plain elder sister and say quietly, "You are very good to me, Drusilla." No, there was no denying it, the two were all in all to each other.

It need scarcely be said that Miss Lavender made a very gentle teacher. In the atmosphere of love emanating from her whole person Henrietta's mind expanded, unfolding like a flower. May was a clever child, too, but in her cleverness lay no great brilliancy, save in a certain aptitude for making the most of her talents. She went on her way like a dancing, shallow brook, keeping pace merrily with her more gifted younger sister: since where one cut a deep road the other scampered along a narrower track, with equal satisfaction at least to herself.

Paul's holidays were the chief events to which the children looked forward. Paul never went through that school-boy stage of awkwardness which despises girls. Perhaps his grandmother's training saved him from this gaucherie, or else, where Henrietta was concerned, he followed the lead of the friend nearly ten years his senior. For whenever Ted Lisle was at home he never failed to invite the children to spend an afternoon at the Grange; and though May generally preferred to follow Sophie to the still-room, where she revelled in sweets like a fly in a honey-pot, Henrietta always remained with her host. In the eyes of the latter it was evident that the little princess could do no wrong.

Ted's recovery, if ever complete, seemed likely to be a long and tedious affair: the injuries he had sustained from his accident yielding only to time, rest, and careful treatment. Despite his delicate health, wherever he went he was a universal favourite. His good spirits were infectious, and his disposition eminently sociable. Children and animals generally found their way to his side unbidden. instinctively sure of a welcome. He had always plenty of stories to tell Henrietta, and Paul used to listen to these tales with a look of perplexity on his own face. "Why don't you write it all down," he would sometimes ask; but at this question Ted always smiled and shook his head. The stories that he wove, like the strange melodies that Henrietta had already begun to evoke from the little old spinet, were but the outcome of some passing mood or fancy, fleeting and fugitive, not reckoned of sufficient importance to be perpetuated.

Paul on the other hand was always scribbling, never happy till some haunting idea had taken shape on paper. Writing was as necessary to him, as talking is necessary to the happiness of some people. Unlike Ted, he would never be fond of society. He was a born bookworm: and he revelled to his heart's content, in the contents of the splendid library at the Grange. When he was seventeen he left school, obtained a scholarship at Balliol College, and had a brilliant career at the university. More of a bookworm than ever, as the years went by, the intent far-away look that had rested upon his face as a child still lingered in his eyes as a man. Had it not been for this very expression of aloofness, and his unusual height, he might easily have passed unnoticed. As it was he interested some people, and baffled others quite unconsciously. Paul had never been a popular boy at school, and excepting for the fact that, like his father before him, he was a fine cricketer, he would have made but few acquaintances anywhere. The men of his own college looked upon him as a good fellow but a very odd one—odd with the eccentricity of genius. He had a great capacity for work, and lived by preference "with books for company," while his old habit of silence clung to him still, blocking up all the avenues that usually lead to intimacy. Passing through his college days much as he had passed through his school ones, he came home at the end of four years, with laurels in plenty; with a brain full of fermenting ideas, and the manuscript of a half-written play in his portmanteau.

Mrs. Godwin often declared Paul to be a very stupid person. He could talk to his father, to Henrietta, or to some few strangers, if only they were sufficiently uninteresting: that is to say uninteresting from Mrs. Godwin's own point of view; but it was a mere piece of affectation that he should usually sit silent as a mute at a funeral, when he could perfectly well join in any general conversation. Of course no one could have expected Paul to grow up into a sensible man, since his father had always let him have his own way in everything. It was a great pity all the same, that that unfortunate manner of his had never been corrected. A manner just sufficiently unlike the rest of the world's to attract attention, would always rank as a source of irritation in Mrs. Godwin's eyes.

Henrietta sometimes wondered if a time might come when Paul would find it necessary to settle in France. True, he never referred to such a contingency; but a thousand unspoken evidences all pointed in this direction, touching the girl's inner consciousness like Iduna's "swarm of nervous apprehensions." Nowadays she never questioned Paul about his grandmother. A fine sense of delicate reserve had so far kept her silent; silent ever since that evening long ago when she had clung to him, sobbing out that he must not leave her, because she could not bear it. Yet the shadowy dread of her childhood's days still lingered; a dread never quite banished or forgotten. Paul would soon be of age, and then he would revisit *La Navette*: of this future journey Henrietta felt assured. The regular correspondence kept up with his grandmother, the articles which he now wrote for more than one French paper, formed a link connecting the present with the past—a past that must surely hold some great grief, if not a tragedy, in it; since the mere mention of *La Navette*, or the sight of a letter bearing a foreign postmark seemed to raise a cloud of sadness to Godwin's brow. At rarer intervals still there would come a look on her uncle's face which Henrietta could not bear to see—a look which she always failed to understand; but beneath which Paul would wince like a person with an unhealed wound inadvertently pressed, a sore suddenly galled. On a foundation slight and fine, as the thread-like clue leading to the heart of a labyrinth, Henrietta built up her fancies; or rather wove them by means of that "*intelletto di amore*," which resides in the heart, not the head.

When the two girls were just seventeen an event occurred

which made Henrietta far more dependent upon Paul's companionship.

One day, very much to Mrs. Godwin's dismay, May suddenly announced that the Misses Swann's teaching was inadequate, and old fashioned, and that no education could be finished properly anywhere excepting in Brussels (by no education May meant her own.)

In vain her mother argued that Miss Lavender was fully competent to teach anybody. May remained deaf to all well-meant advice; and showed so much determination, not to say obstinacy, that Mrs. Godwin, unaccustomed to opposition in large matters, and completely taken aback by the proposed scheme, presently burst into tears.

"May, what would you do without me?"

"I should come back in six months time," said May smiling.

"I should miss you apparently more than you would miss me," said her mother in tones of reproach.

May coloured. "I daresay I am selfish, Mamma, but I do want to go abroad so much. I am tired of this stupid village, where nothing ever happens but church on Sundays, and the Misses Swann all the week round, and their old-fashioned lessons. We are like the people in the poem. I am not sure if I can remember the lines correctly, but I know the sense of them," and still smiling she repeated:

"'But no!—they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way,
And we shall rub through, if we can,
To-morrow on the self same plan,
Till death arrive to supersede
For us, vicissitude and need.'

"If we can," she repeated, "that's just the rub. Supposing that we can't? or rather supposing that I can't? Mamma, do you mean to keep me here till death meets my 'needs' and 'vicissitudes'?"

"My dear, hush!" said her mother.

"If I don't say it I shall think it, Mamma. It would be different if we could go away as cousin Evelyn does, or yacht with cousin Sol, and uncle John: but we are mewed up here all the year round. We are no better off than the villagers. Mamma, do you mean to stay here always?"

"Really, my dear, I have not thought about it."

"Well, I have," said May, "and I do not mean to remain in Godwin's Worthy much longer, if I can help it. I do wish, dear Mamma, that you would try to look at the matter from my point of view, I do so hate to be made to feel selfish."

This was the sum total of May's reasoning. She was not without affections, but so far they lingered in the background of the little stage, created by her own personality; while her will, filling all the foreground, had never yet received a check.

It never occurred to Mrs. Godwin that the education which was not good enough for one daughter, should also be insufficient for the other. May declared that Henrietta was far too clever already; besides, the expense had to be taken into consideration. Spoiled child that she was, May gained her own way, and started for Brussels within a month of first making her proposition, taking her farewells very light-heartedly, her whole mind being full of excitement over the complete change, and the prospect of foreign life.

Once abroad, she made great friends with another English girl, a Miss Strafford, who was at the same school, and whose mother, the widow of a general, lived in a pretty villa just outside the town. Next, by an odd coincidence, Mrs. Strafford turned out to be a distant cousin of Lady Evelyn's, and Mrs. Godwin felt very well pleased when May received an invitation to spend her short holidays with these new friends. The mode of life suited the girl exactly, and she seemed in no hurry to return to England.

During May's absence Henrietta drew closer to Paul than ever. On his return home for the vacation she had never once failed to meet him at the old favourite spot beneath the Dryad's oak. The little pink chestnut which she herself had planted was a tall tree now, yearly covered with blossoms, and long after outgrowing other childish habits, her fondness for the old traditions still lingered.

Over Henrietta's head time passed quickly and her eighteenth birthday drew near. Stately, slender, and fair, she grew up, as the tall Mary lilies in her uncle's garden: that is to say, fair skinned, for her eyes were black-lashed, deep and soft as a midsummer sky at night; and her hair, of rare auburn, all gold in the sunshine, all black in the shadow, framed her face in a glory of its own. In a word Henrietta was beautiful: beautiful with a strange haunting loveliness of form and feature. Nature had given to her a face whose pure curves and delicate colouring would be apt to linger in

the memory like the thought of spring flowers in winter, of April sunshine, of the scent of roses. A face once met with, never to be forgotten. In the village of Godwin's Worthy the very cottagers gazed after her with a smile. Even the curate of the parish, in his conventional calls on Mrs. Godwin, sometimes faltered in his speech when the girl's dark eyes met his. Such unconscious eyes they were too, for Henrietta was still a child at heart, and would see nothing of society till her sister came home again.

May's return had been put off no less than three times. With some difficulty, on leaving school, she obtained permission to travel in the Black Forest with Mrs. and Miss Strafford. Then her stay must be prolonged as her girl friend was about to be married: next the wedding was delayed owing to an unexpected death in the family of the bridegroom. Her lengthened absence bade fair to exhaust Mrs. Godwin's patience. However, the last week in April brought a letter from the traveller, fixing the date of her return for the end of next month. A convenient escort had offered itself in the person of one of the governesses from the German school, Fräulein Sandkatze, a middle aged lady of irreproachable manners. Henrietta waited eagerly for her sister's return. Life at Godwin's Worthy had been very uneventful during the past year. Lady Evelyn called the village Sleepy Hollow! and the name was not an inappropriate one, though a new line of railway now being laid in the little valley promised to make the place livelier; to the satisfaction of the rising generation, and the discontent of some of the older residents. In the absence of other distractions, Henrietta had half a dozen hobby horses, and rode them hard. Gardening she loved, and music seemed to exercise a spell upon her. She improvised in true Italian fashion, and sang beautifully, thanks to Miss Lavender's teaching. She was an omnivorous reader, too, though her library might have been modelled on Joubert's, for Ted Lisle constantly sent her books with any paragraph that displeased him ruthlessly torn out. She never studied the newspapers indiscriminately, since her uncle always read the Times aloud at breakfast, and handed it on to his old soldier servant Jeremiah afterwards. For the rest Shakespeare, Sophocles, Burke, Carlyle, and Matthew Arnold; Tennyson, Owen Meredith, Mill, and Charles Lamb; Schiller and Elder, Sainte Beuve, Bossuet, Petrarch and Mazzini; Lear's Nonsense book and the ever loved Hans Andersen, could

all be found side by side on her book-shelf in most admired confusion.

She had even waded dutifully after Paul through a sea of political economy, interspersed with fairy tales it must be confessed by way of relaxation. Possibly her fancy was none the worse for its mingled elements of child and scholar.

Yet nature appealed to her more strongly than books. When out of doors she lived in a kingdom of her own, where no thought of pain or sorrow ever intruded, save through an artistic and idealised medium. Without any sense of loneliness she was often alone; riding her pony through the long glades of the park with Jeremiah pottering after in the far distance; wandering whole days in the woods with Bellissima trotting at her heels; reading and thinking up in the attic, and playing on the old spinet; visiting the realm of sorrow, and sad sometimes in her music, without sadness. Following Beethoven and Schubert, and playing as if in a dream, a part not her own. At such times if Paul were present he would look at her startled, "for we are most near waking when we dream that we dream."

Would such a life as Henrietta's grow to weakness or to strength, Paul sometimes wondered. Except when Mrs. Godwin appeared, the girl was petted and shielded by the whole household, and the reason lay close at hand,—she was the only member of the family whose path no conscious sorrow had ever crossed. Send some small child into the wards of a hospital, and one may be sure that the patients will try to keep every sign of their suffering hidden away—fearful of touching or chilling the small figure of joy, with one shadow of that inevitable pain which falls too soon upon every life. Probably for this cause John Godwin, Paul, Sophie, and Jeremiah all took care of Henrietta. Mrs. Godwin's indifference never yet analysed, fully comprehended or resented by her daughter, represented a palpable injustice to the rest of the household, and roused, in Sophie's breast, much private indignation.

Constantly reprov'd and under the yoke of Mrs. Godwin's remarks and comments, Henrietta had unconsciously become fearful of ever letting anyone inside the gate of that world where her own mind dwelt so happily—that delightful, barely explored realm of nature and of thought, full of fair visions bathed in sunshine—a land pure and innocent, with no shadows in it darker than those

delicate, palely blue ones, which are cast by one snow bank upon another. This beautiful kingdom was her own, her pet treasure-house of delight and loveliness, through which, wandering at will, one could hardly envy the angels. A fairy land free surely to everybody. It never occurred to Henrietta that anyone would care to share her own little footway through it. The older she grew the more closely she drew a veil of silence, and reserve over her own feelings. Sarcasm withers confidence, and Mrs. Godwin was nearly always gently sarcastic. Therefore the pleasures that came to Henrietta were enjoyed with an intense yet solitary kind of happiness which might have filled any mother's heart with a sense of amazement. For the girl was grown up now, and no one quite realised this fact: she herself least of all. Possibly the full consciousness of her eighteen years might still have lingered awhile on the way, had it not been for one of those small causes from which greater events so often spring.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh, when most self-exalted, most alone,
 Chief dreamer, own thy dream !
 Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown ;
 Who hath a monarch's path, no brother's part,
 Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem ;
 Oh, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart.

M. ARNOLD.

ONE lovely morning early in May, Henrietta started for a walk in company with Bellissima—Bellissima, now old in years, but likely to live some time yet, to judge by appearances. Henrietta wished to spend some hours in the park. The distance to be accomplished was not great; the country road was generally quiet enough, but to-day the way was nearly blocked by a number of covered carts, part of a great show of wild beasts, circus horses, dwarfs, and pigmies travelling to the country town, there to give several performances. A stone in the foot of one of the leading horses necessitating a temporary halt, the caravans had all come to a standstill opposite the park gates. Passing the carts with Bellissima growling at her heels, Henrietta came presently to the last of

the string. Here two of the horses had turned across the way, and were cropping the fresh grass, and by the open door of this caravan stood a man who had just climbed down into the road. Arrested in her onward progress, the girl stood for a moment waiting, looking, in her white dress, like the very outcome of the spring morning; but the man stared up at her with a scowl, and she gazed back at him again, fascinated and speechless.

Such a marred, twisted, misshapen semblance of humanity she had never seen before. The head was out of all proportion to the body; the back hunched, the arms long, lean and skeletonian. But it was not so much the terrible deformity that held the girl spellbound, it was the mocking devil looking out of the eyes now meeting hers—mockery which seemed to show a soul tortured and misshapen as its outer garment.

"If you've a mind to see part of the show without paying anything, I hope you're satisfied," the hunchback remarks.

"I beg your pardon," said Henrietta, involuntarily.

"No offence," he said, swinging his long, lean arms up and down, and chuckling a little. "You're welcome to look, and laugh too, if you've a mind to; I'm quite used to that sort of thing. I've belonged to travelling caravans, beasts, dwarfs, and such-like for the last fifty years. Not much in your line, anyhow, I reckon."

"What makes you think that?" said Henrietta.

"Few people care to have a second look at me," he said, "particularly the refined quality like yourself."

Some girls might have turned back now, alarmed at the scarcely veiled insolence of the man's manner, but Henrietta stood still. Tears filled her eyes, while half beneath her breath she said: "I wonder how you have borne it."

A tinge of surprise appeared on the hunchback's face.

"You are eighteen or thereabouts, I suppose," he remarked, "and I am sixty-five. There's a long bit of road atween us, but I was your age once, and creaking wheels last longest. I've travelled it, cursing every step of the way, as you would be like, if you were in my shoes."

"No! oh, no!" said Henrietta.

"Yes you would," said he, leaning both arms on the top of the wheel. The mockery had gone from his voice, yet, if possible, his earnestness seemed more horrible than his mockery. "Yes you

would. You wonder how I have borne it, do you? Well I haven't borne it, never shall. The children point at me if I show myself in the streets; it's the caravan over again on a small scale. What's the world ever done for me, I should like to know? Never anything but laugh and jeer, or pity at best: and pity is next door to loathing in my case." Here he shifted his gaze uneasily. Something in the startled, innocent eyes looking at him so compassionately seemed to give the lie to his words. There was a movement among the line of carts too, the leading horses were about to start off again. "The people crack more jokes over me than over anybody else," he went on, "rare jokes; honest farmers and their wives; I've laughed till I've cried to hear them talk, some of them seemed a sight too disgusted to look at what the Almighty was pleased to make. Ah! it's a rare world for the straight ones. What would they say if they changed bodies with my sort once in a while? Curse all the straight ones, say I; and so would you if you were in my place." And here the hunchback climbed up into the cart again, and shut the door, and before Henrietta could frame any sort of answer, the procession disappeared up the road.

Once more left alone, the girl stood for a few minutes absolutely motionless, conscious chiefly of a benumbed feeling. The twisted figure in its mocking uncouthness had the same effect upon her sometimes produced by a vision; it seemed too terrible, and at the same time too transitory to be true.

After a while, pushing open the park gate, she struck across the grass, and made her way to a little coppice, a quiet corner, where few people ever came. She wanted to be alone, yet, for the first time in her young life the very peace and beauty of a spring morning jarred upon her feelings.

The sun was warm on the young beeches, just now coming into leaf, and on the red-tipped fingers of the baby larches, whose velvet-like tufts of bloom drooped downwards to mingle with the golden ranks of the cowslips growing knee-deep in the grass. The great humble bees, drowsy with sweets, were flying heavily from flower to flower; and the deeper undergrowth was wet still with warm dew. It was a day of expanding life, when all winged creatures must surely float, and all nature rejoice.

Henrietta, resting her head for one moment against a lime branch, almost fancied that she could hear the fresh sap racing upwards

to tinge the rose, in the veins of the new-born and delicate leaves. Moving on again, and coming presently to an old thorn tree, she sat down on a low spreading branch, and gave herself up to reflection.

So far there had been no pain in her life, save through her finer sympathies. True she had read of suffering, but the martyrs and saints belonged to that number who "have seen past the agony." Her world had been peopled by figures of acquiescence, and even the sins and sorrows of bygone generations seemed bygone and very far off.

Perhaps most young shielded natures feel like this. It is all very well to read in a history book, to a placidly working governess, that Nero murdered many people; or that celebrities, like Empedocles, tired of life, have leaped down Etna. Children can read of such things without too much of a shock; but some time, into every life there comes an hour when the cold fingers of reality tear down the curtains of our childish dream-world—a world that always has enough to eat and to drink, and never sins, save through an occasional fit of petulance—and then, instead of listening to a set of stories doled out by some old *raconteur*, we take a seat nearer to the stage for the future, to find out that the tragedies go on hand in hand with the farces; and that the characters, no longer shades, are living souls; or more terrible still, we receive our first call to join the performers!

The call-boy had come to Henrietta to-day. The pain and revolt seeming to belong to an ideal world of the past and the dead, now suddenly took shape, rising up in the charmed circle of her life, like some terrible living reality, knitting together the past and the present; forging the link of realisation which binds each unit to the next in the chain of humanity.

Alas for Henrietta! the curtains of her dream-world were torn rudely apart, and all across the sunshine of her own happiness fell now the first dark shadow of the world's misery. The picture thus presented came upon her with the effect of a shock. In her world of acquiescence the hunchback had struck the first note of revolt, open revolt of a kind never before imagined.

Pain, mental and bodily, appeals most forcibly to some of us, when it touches those we love; others, more selfish, care only for that discomfort which is personal in its effects. Life is a pageant, and they sitting on cushions in the stalls look on as spectators.

Mrs. Godwin would have striven to forget the existence of such a being as the hunchback ; failing this his presence would have filled her with a fierce sense of loathing and disgust. But Henrietta was conscious now of a feeling mightier than any loathing. The man's words had struck out all possibility of that. They rang on still in her ears : " What has the world ever done for me ? Nothing but jeer."

Henrietta's glance wandered presently to the blue of the sky, to the straight limbed trees, the happy birds, the delicate-winged butterflies that flitted amongst the May bloom ; all rejoicing, all perfect in beauty. Could she curse them all, she to whom nature had ever been a true mother, she who loved these things—the movement of the corn, the shiver of the wind among the beeches, the whisper of the rushes, the murmur of the river, the music of the swans' wings—she who could so truly say :

" I have friends in spirit land,
Not shadows in a shadowy band.
Not others, but themselves are they."

It could not lessen her suffering, did the whole world suffer in concert ; but what must be the sum-total of pain in the universe, since the affliction of one man alone seemed so terrible.

In the midst of all this loveliness there swept over her for the first time an agony of regret, a sense of unmeasured desolation. The world was not less beautiful, it seemed more so ; but the silent sorrow in it had suddenly found a voice, and called for her recognition ; while the very loveliness of the morning thrust home the sharpness of the contrast.

What if she, too, were numbered amongst those upon whom hope's gates were for ever closed ?

Shutting out the sunshine, she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears. What if she, too, were deformed and ugly, and poor, and her very deformity made a public laughing stock, for this world's scorn to point at. What if the fiat had gone forth, and she, too, stood marred and twisted, one of a company, " with wounds and disfigurements, as of those who hang upon crosses." The hunchback, conquered by the ill of a deformity, was yet a man—flesh and blood like herself—an embodiment of pain, too, and a cry of revolt. Mocking his own misery, rejecting the material given, he had mutilated his life to match it. But must all life, when so weighted, run captive ever, and in chains.

As if in answer to this thought, a puff of wind floated by laden with the scent of May blossom. Henrietta looked up now, dashing away her tears, glancing at the tree, amid whose profusion of flowers she had found a seat. There is such a wealth in May bloom, even in one branch; and this little tree, crooked and twisted, distorted and bent, covered over with rough lichen, and beaten by the weather, showed yet a mantle of white stars, and every star bore a crown of stamens.

Slowly as a sunbeam creeps over a shadow, a smile crept over her face. Those who call nature cruel have never loved her in sincerity; to her own children she is very pitiful. As Henrietta sat musing, the cool wind fanned her cheek, and cradled between those twisted branches, her spirit, re-baptised, passed out through the portals of suffering, through the drifts of the flowers, on to the measureless calm of the blue.

What if into this other life, marred and twisted though it might be, the touch of helping hands had come? By a natural association of ideas, Henrietta's thoughts went presently to Ted Lisle. True, his burden was a light one when compared with the hunchback's, yet he, too, might easily have been a hopeless cripple, had not love and skill watched over him from the first day of his accident. His life had been so guarded and cared for during the past few years, that, though he could never be able to take any violent exercise, or to join in field sports, he had by this time discarded his crutches, and was able to go about much like other people; indeed there was some talk of his spending the next winter in England. Yet, all through the years when he had lain on his back, all through his tedious convalescence he had seemed carelessly and completely oblivious of his crippled state, where most natures might pardonably have winced and agonised again and again. Ted would never have cursed "all the straight ones" either. Henrietta could easily fancy him saying that it would be too much trouble. During his Eton and Cambridge days, and even as an invalid, the family motto, *Sans Souci*, had stuck to him as a nickname. He was often called by it still. Yet, to-day, a great desire came over Henrietta to find out if Ted were always as light-hearted as he seemed to be. During the past hour the whole movement of her world had been reversed by a mighty lever of pain and pity. A shadow had crept into her Eden, and life could never be the same again, while all

those others suffered outside. True, the hunchback had cursed all the straight ones, but she could not give back scorn for scorn, when the pain lying behind the curse had bared itself to her pity. For all tortured, troubled humanity, in the heart of the girl as she sat alone, there was nothing but love to-day. For the first time even Mrs. Godwin's personality was temporarily banished and swept into the background. Unknown to herself, every incident in Henrietta's past had been tending towards this moment. From the sunlight, the sky, the air, the flowers; from the accumulated treasure of years, gathered in from her babyhood; tapped now by one fierce touch, the spring at her heart welled up in a fountain, carrying all before it. Not to receive, Henrietta longed, but to give, to give inexhaustibly.

(To be continued.)

The Betrothal of Mary Coniston.

By E. WHITE.

CHAPTER I.

"IN HONOUR BOUND."

It was between the acts of a Wagnerian opera, in the theatre of a well-known German garrison town. Most of the audience had disappeared, and were promenading in the corridors and foyer; and all the first circle boxes were empty, with one exception, and in this, conversing earnestly, there still remained an English girl of great and striking beauty, and a tall distinguished-looking man, who, although wearing the uniform of a German cavalry officer, had a decidedly British appearance.

"Yes, Mary," he was saying in a low voice, "it is to-morrow we fight."

"To-morrow!" she exclaimed, flushing slightly. "So soon as that? But what made you quarrel with Heinrich, Walther?"

"Oh, I thought I had told you," he answered quickly. "The quarrel was none of my seeking; to tell the truth it was his jealousy. He cannot endure my being so often with you, I understand.

Therefore he took the first opportunity of insulting me before my brother officers, and in so doing, called the honour of the regiment into question, and that, of course, brought matters to a climax."

"I wonder what right he has to be jealous," she said, with a curl of her beautiful lip. "I suppose he thinks because I went through that foolish betrothal ceremony* that I actually belong to him, which I do not, and—" she hesitated.

"And what?" he asked eagerly.

"I never shall," she continued, determinedly. "I did what they persuaded me to do, but it was in ignorance. I did not know my own heart then; but I know it now."

"If you repudiate him it will kill Heinrich," he said under his breath, "and you cannot, Mary; the betrothal binds you."

"It does not, it does not," she interrupted impatiently. "I am English, and to me it is not binding. He must find someone else to love and rave over. There are plenty of others."

"Plenty of others, it is true," he said quietly; "but none like you, Mary."

She smiled brightly; she was well accustomed to flattery, and heeded it little; but this compliment pleased her, for it came from the man she loved.

"Although I know it is not true," she said gently, "I am happy that you think it so, Walther." And she lifted the long lashes which veiled her large brown eyes, and looking up full into his face, added, "But this duel—I cannot help thinking of it. I should like to know it was over—safely over."

"You may rest assured, Mary," he answered promptly, "that it will end safely, as far as he is concerned. I shall fire into the air. My mother, as you know, was an Englishwoman; she brought me up to hate these duels; but a German officer cannot, under any circumstances, refuse to fight when challenged. I shall fire into the air."

"Fire into the air?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I could not endure to have a man's life upon my hands; it would seem to me too much like murder."

"But your life, Walther? Think—he would not hesitate to take yours."

* In Germany the betrothal ceremony is regarded as binding as the marriage rite, which it usually precedes.

"Perhaps," he said, doubtfully; "but that is not the point. I have only myself to answer for, and therefore my life is of little consequence. I shall fire into the air."

"I would give years and years of my life," she said slowly, as if speaking to herself and unconscious of his presence, "if I were once more free—free of this horrid bond. It seems terrible if it is really so binding, and especially when—" and now she spoke almost in a whisper, "when I might have been so happy."

"Dear Mary," and his voice shook, and the hand that rested upon the hilt of his sword trembled, "as it is for you, so it is for me. When that day you told me of your betrothal it broke my heart, but even with love and hope dead, I still pray I may live out my life worthily to its end."

"A man may live without hope and love, a woman cannot—remember, a woman cannot," she murmured bitterly.

He saw the tears gather in her eyes, and he felt a strange huskiness, which prevented any attempt to reply, and silence fell upon them both. But it was soon broken by the sound of voices; the musicians commenced to take their seats, and slowly the auditorium began to refill. The Frau General, in whose house the English fräulein had been living for nearly two years past, and who had accompanied her, according to custom, to the theatre, now joined them with her little fair-haired daughter in the box.

"Oh! Frau General, you are in good time," Mary Coniston exclaimed, throwing herself back in her chair and assuming a cheerful attitude. "The curtain will not rise for three minutes yet. Herr Hauptmann, you see, has been entertaining me in your absence. We have been talking English. This is the last act, and I am thankful, for I am feeling very tired." Then turning to the officer, she said, "Good-night, Herr Hauptmann," adding in a low voice, "Think of my misery to-morrow, and do not fire into the air."

* * * *

Walther never knew exactly how it happened, but when he stood face to face with Heinrich, her last words rang in his ears like a command, and before he fired he took deliberate aim. So unerring was his aim, that, when he looked again, he saw his adversary lying stretched upon the ground, and for one terrible moment he believed him to be dead. And now that it was over, all that followed

seemed to him like a dream, too terrible to recall, too hideous to be true. The lifting up of the unconscious man, the blood from a frightful wound in the face just between the eyes, flowing over his hands—the hands that had shed it,—the drive to the hospital, his confession to the military authorities, and afterwards his meeting with his comrades, the mockery it had been to him to hear their warm commendation at his having so successfully upheld the honour of the regiment.

News of the injured man had reached him—he lived, but was in a most critical state, and even if skill and care should save his life, his sight would be lost to him for ever.

And then, as he sat alone, brooding over this in hopeless despair, a letter was brought to him from Mary, in which she congratulated him upon his safety, but never a word of that other—the victim, lying in terrible suffering and darkness.

Oh! she must be cruel and heartless, indeed; cruel and heartless beyond conception. Could he still love her? still continue to love her, knowing this? What were beauty of face and form without beauty of soul?

Yet, as his eye fell upon the photograph she had enclosed within the note, he knew that he loved her as wildly and as passionately as ever.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLEDGE REDEEMED.

“Mariechen, come to me, let me feel your hand in mine. Mariechen, you will still love me though I am blind—Mariechen—my Mariechen?”

These were the words dictated to the nurse by the unfortunate Heinrich von Armbrecht, when at last he recovered consciousness. The little piece of paper was despatched to Mary Coniston by a trusted messenger, and put into her hands that same day. And he waited and waited for the answer that never came; and then again he sent to her, and still always no reply.

“Mariechen,” he wrote once more, by the hand of the nurse, “Can it be you will not come, that you do not love me any longer, because I am blind, disfigured? Is this why you remain away, my

beloved, my betrothed, my own? But remember in life or death you still belong to me. I will never part from you nor give you up to him. No, never! never! Death, I know, is near me; but do not think that means release for you. No, love is stronger than death—such love as mine. My weakness binds me down now, so that I cannot come to you; but death will set me free, and in that hour I will come for you, and you shall be mine for ever beyond the grave.”

Mary Coniston shuddered as she read these words in spite of herself, in spite of the reflection that they were those of a man whose brain was weakened, and intellect consequently shattered by continuous and intense suffering. But she resolved to leave Germany at once, and return to her friends in England, where she knew Walther would join her, after the short period of detention in a fortress expired, to which, as a matter of form, he had been condemned by the Court Martial, for what the men who composed it considered a perfectly admirable act, rather than an offence, and in no sense whatever a crime.

* * * *

At the expiration of three months Walther's hour of release came, and his first act was to leave the army, where he felt life would be intolerable now. Large property had been left to him by a distant relative in England, and thither he immediately repaired, and shortly after became engaged to Mary Coniston.

Heinrich was still detained in the hospital, suffering greatly, and quite blind, with death creeping upon him slowly but surely.

Mary thought no more of him; she did not even answer the imploring, indignant letter she had received from the sister, who loved him; and she smiled at the threat of retribution it contained. What retribution could reach her; and after all what evil had she done that she should merit it? she asked herself. Could it be expected that she, beautiful and rich, the desired of all, should sacrifice herself for the sake of one who had become blind and disfigured, a helpless invalid? Surely he never could have loved her, to even wish that such a thing could be.

The wedding day drew near. Mary Coniston, ever since her return to England, had been staying in the country with her uncle, who was squire of the village, and from whose house she was to be married.

Proud of the beauty of his niece, her uncle, who was rich and a

bachelor, resolved to give a grand ball in her especial honour, to celebrate the approaching marriage. It was fixed to take place upon the last day of July, and when the night arrived it proved a perfectly ideal one for such an occasion.

The dancing proceeded vigorously until twelve o'clock, when the musicians, having retired for rest and refreshment, the guests promenaded through the gardens, or lingered about the terrace, upon which the long French windows of the ball-room opened. Mary, the belle of the ball, had escaped from a crowd of admirers, that she might be for a few moments alone with Walther. They strolled into the deserted ball-room, and, as they stood together in the brilliant light of many gaseliers, he proudly gazed upon her beautiful face, and the loveliness of her form in its clinging white dress, little dreaming it was for the last time. He thought of the hour when he had seen her first, three years ago, in the old Museum Hall, in the far away German town, where he had loved and won her. He forgot the terrible thing that had happened there, and how it had come about that she was plighted to him now, and remembered only the happy days they had passed together. Some inexplicable impulse moved him to ask her to sing the German song which had been his favourite then.

At his request she seated herself at the piano, and touching the keys with the skill and ease of the fine musician she was, played the melody over softly, then, as she broke into song, the sounds of merriment without ceased, and all the guests crowded into the room to listen.

She sang wonderfully, with the true sympathetic power that the singing of such a song needed; but when she came to the third verse a sudden pause ensued, and starting up, she seized the hand of Walther, and pointed towards the window facing them, out into the night. Her face had turned ashen white, she trembled violently—her teeth chattered.

"Walther," she cried, "Look—there—there. It is he—Heinrich! Heinrich! Oh, hold me, hold me fast. He will take me. Hold me—hold me fast—fast. Oh! Walther—fast—fast!"

She threw her arms around him wildly, and clung to him with all her strength, at the same time that she gave utterance to a fearful shriek, paralysing with awe and horror the hearts of all the assembled guests, who had crowded round her. But they did not

see what the lovers saw, the figure of a man standing just within the window, dressed only in a shirt, a white bandage across his eyes, his arms stretched out towards her, the thin emaciated fingers of his long hands spread out, and a plain gold ring glittering upon the third finger;* and the sound of the low hollow voice did not reach their ears, calling:

“Mariechen! Mariechen!”

Walther drew her close to him. He held her with all his strength, no mortal man could have wrested her from him; but it was not with mortal power he had to combat now.

“Darling,” he whispered, “it is but fancy. Do not be afraid, I can—” he broke off. Her grasp had suddenly relaxed, her eyes, which were strained fixedly towards the place where the figure had stood, but which he saw no longer, had a strange, fixed stare in them. He could not feel her breathe, she lay quite white and still, her hands were growing cold; the awful truth forced itself upon him—Mary Coniston had gone with Heinrich, her plighted troth had been redeemed; it was a corpse he held within his arms. The horror of it overpowered him, and he fell senseless to the floor.

* * * *

The day following, when she was lying dead, a telegram reached the mansion for Mary Coniston.

He opened it, and read thus:

“On the 31st, a few minutes after midnight, my brother Heinrich died with your name upon his lips.”—*Olga von Armbrecht.*

* * * *

Walther left England. He sought for peace of mind—sought it everywhere—in foreign, far distant lands, but in vain. At last, in the quiet of the Swiss hills, in a lonely monastery, among the holy men who had devoted their lives to God, he believed that he had found it. But, although only thirty, he was grey-haired and quite broken down when, the year after, death came to him, and the kind-hearted fraternity buried him in their little cemetery, just outside the monastery walls.

* In Germany the engagement ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand, and the marriage ring on the third finger of the right hand, just reversing the English custom. [Ed. note.]

Charlotte de la Tremouille,

COUNTESS OF DERBY.

By A. M. JUDD,

Author of "DON CARLOS," "JIMMY'S CHOICE," etc., etc.

MANY celebrated women have borne the title of Countess of Derby, but not one more celebrated or worthy of all honour than Charlotte, daughter of Claude, Duc de la Tremouille, and Charlotte, his wife. This latter lady was a daughter of the famous William the Silent, Count of Nassau and Prince of Orange.

She was born near Poitou in 1601, and the babe who then first saw the light of day had ancestors who were allied to the Kings of France, and the Houses of Bourbon-Montpensier, Bourbon-Condé, the Dukes of Anjou, the Kings of Naples and Sicily, the Archdukes of Austria, the Kings of Spain, the Earls and Dukes of Savoy, the Dukes of Milan, and several other sovereign princes, for her maternal grandmother, the wife of William of Orange, was Charlotte de Bourbon.

Notwithstanding that opportunities for acquiring knowledge were few in those days, little Charlotte, at the age of six, according to Madame de Witt, was a prodigy, and wrote the following letter to her mother on an occasion when she had gone on a long journey :

"Madame,—Since you went away I have become very good. Thank God you will find me quite learned. I know seventeen Psalms, all the quatrains of Picbrac ; all the Mutains of Jamaniel, and above all I can talk Latin. My little brother is so pretty, he could not be prettier ; when visitors come he is quite enough to entertain them. It seems, Madame, a very long time since we saw you. Pray love me. Madame de S. Christophe says you are well, for which I thanked God. I pray to God for you. Humbly kiss the hands of my good aunt and my little cousins. I am, Madame, your very humble and very obedient and good daughter, CHARLOTTE DE TREMOUILLE."

Rather a curious epistle for a child of six to write. What a model of all the virtues this little girl must have been ! Fancy a child of the

present day "humbly kissing the hands of aunt and cousins," or signing herself "your humble, obedient and good daughter."

Charlotte's amiability must have been great, for she was a general favourite, and received many beautiful presents on different occasions from relatives and friends. The Prince of Orange sent her three dozen ruby and pearl buttons on one of her birthdays, and on another the Princess, his wife, presented her with a carcanet of diamonds and rubies, and a cousin gave her a dress of silver tissue, which is described as having been peculiarly beautiful and costly.

It was while staying at the Hague in 1620, that Charlotte first met Lord James Strange, and the young couple were mutually attracted towards each other; the handsome young Englishman being much struck by her *esprit* and beauty, while she secretly admired him for his gallantry and sweet disposition.

They were not married until 1626, and many of the bride-maidens envied Lady Strange on that bright wedding-day, for the groom was handsome and amiable, as well as heir to vast possessions in Lancashire, and no one foresaw then the heavy burden of sorrow which was to fall to the lot of the fair bride. Lord James was described as the eldest son of the Earl of d'Herbie.

The Earl was then living at Chester; so when the newly-married couple arrived in England, he established them at Lathom House. This spot, famous as the place so long defended against the parliamentary forces, and the last in the kingdom to yield to Cromwell's troops, is near Ormskirk, in the county of Lancashire, and is rich in historical interest. The house was enclosed by strong walls two yards thick. Upon these walls were nine towers flanking each other, and in every tower were pieces of ordnance. Without was a moat, eight yards wide and two deep. Upon the bank of the moat, between the wall and the grass, a row of strong palisades was planted, and in the midst of the house, surmounting all these, was a strong, high tower, called the Eagle Tower, from which a constant watch was kept over the surrounding country for many miles. The gatehouse also was a massive building, and on the walls and the towers were places for marksmen, who could pick off attacking foes and thin their ranks.

A more modern residence now stands upon the site of the old mansion, and though an imposing pile, distinct traces of the older building still exist; while, it is said, some ghastly relics of the long siege were

brought to light in the grounds not many years ago. These relics took the shape of five skeletons, bringing the number of those slain *inside* the defended position up to seven. One of these skeletons was, no doubt, that of the gigantic follower of Lady Derby, who met his death by a bullet, which found its mark in Jan's neck, he "havinge putte ye head over ye wall."

Lathom House, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, stood on flat, marshy ground, its surroundings being very different from the cultivated acres which now enclose the house, its situation, massive encompassing wall, and fortified towers, making it a place well calculated to resist an obstinate and prolonged siege. The Manor of Lathom, and part of the present Knowsley estate became the property of Sir John Stanley, knight, about the year 1414, on his marriage with Isabel Lathom.

When Charlotte de la Tremouille first came to England after the celebration of the brilliant marriage arranged for her, and began her new life in her husband's old, historic house, she little dreamed of the troubles in store, or of the heavy burden of sorrow that would fall to her lot. The early years of her married life, however, seem to have been perfectly happy, her husband being entirely devoted to her.

The birth of her first child was, of course, a very important affair, and in writing of it, Lady Strange, as she then was, tells of the grand and formal ceremony attending its baptism, when the infant was carried by four ladies, the wives of knights, and the Archbishop of Chester officiated, while Charles I. sent a set of costly christening cups, and the young mother received from the Duchess of Richmond a beautiful turquoise bracelet.

In all, Charlotte bore her husband six children, three sons and three daughters: Charles Lord Strange; Edward and William; Mary, who married William, Earl of Strafford; Catherine, who espoused Henry, Marquis of Dorset; and Amelia, who became Countess of Athol.

Though in the first part of their married life Charlotte and her husband seemed to have resided chiefly at Lathom, they possessed another historic residence in the Isle of Man, and indeed the whole island belonged to them. The aforementioned Sir John Stanley, knight, being sent to seize the island in the reign of Henry IV. (upon the forfeiture of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, by his rebel-

lion) had it given to him by the King, Henry allowing Sir John to be styled King of Man, and his successors were so called, down to Thomas, second Earl of Derby, after which either "modesty or policy made them call themselves only Lords of Man." It is said they thought it more honourable to be great lords than petty kings.

The tenure of this valuable property depended upon a very trifling act of homage, and the presentation to His Majesty of some birds to be used in falconry. According to Dugdale it was "a grant in fee of the same isle, castle and pile, and all the isles adjacent, as also all the regalities, franchises and all rights thereunto belonging, and patronage of the bishopric there, to be held of the King, his heirs and successors, by homage and the service of two falcons, payable on the days of their coronation."

James Stanley was called to parliament by writ in 1627, the third year of the reign of Charles I. From that time, to his death in 1651, the government of the Isle of Man was administered by him, and he proved one of the most faithful of the King's adherents, for he was one of the first who joined Charles at York, when His Majesty was obliged to repair there, on account of the disturbances and dangerous tumults at Westminster.

Being ordered back to Lancashire to prepare for the impending struggle, he set up his standard at Warrington, and mustered the whole country on three heaths near Bury, Ormskirk and Preston, enlisting men at each place.

The standard was then set up at Nottingham, but the "counties not coming in as freely as expected, the King, by special letters, desired his lordship to raise what men he could and hasten to him."

He raised amongst his tenants, dependents, and private friends, three troops of horse, and three regiments of foot soldiers, arming and clothing them at his own cost, and posted them at Shrewsbury to await the King's commands; at the same time he placed a large sum of money at his sovereign's disposal.

The party then sitting in Parliament at Westminster offered him immense bribes to quit the Kingdom, to which attempts to corrupt his loyalty he made answer: "When I turn traitor I may hearken to these propositions, but till then, let me have no more of these papers, at the peril of him who brings them."

In 1643, the towns of Lancaster and Preston having been garrisoned by the enemy, the earl began to strengthen the fortifica-

tions at Lathom, at the same time doing his best to raise troops for the King, and while thus occupied he heard that the Scotch had a design upon the Isle of Man. Almost immediately after he received an express message from Charles, telling him that a plan had been formed to seize the Isle, and that without his speedy care, it would be lost, and beseeching him, for the security of the place, to hasten thither at once.

Upon perusing these despatches, he said to the Countess, "My heart! My enemies have now their will, having prevailed with his Majesty to order me to the Isle of Man, as a softer banishment from his presence and their malice."

He knew how to obey, however, never disputed the King's command, and went thither, first making necessary provisions of "men, moneys, and ammunition, for the protection and defence of his incomparable lady at Lathom, to whose charge he committed his children, house, and other English concerns.

Soon after her lord's departure for the Isle of Man, Charlotte refused a demand to give up Lathom House. She remained a prisoner within its precincts until February, 1644, when, on the 28th day of that month, the siege began, and was carried on with vigour by the attacking party. The building was most heroically defended by the besieged until the 27th or 29th day of May in the same year. The assault was directed by General Sir Thomas Fairfax, assisted by Colonels Egerton, Holerose, Ashford, and an engineer, one Major Morgan.

Towards the close of the month Colonel Rigby thought fit to withdraw his forces and march to Bolton. During the three months this intrepid Countess of Derby defended Lathom House, assisted by Major Farmer and Captains Farrington, Charnock, Ogle, Rosthern, Chifenhall, Molineux, and Radcliffe. Aided by the valour and noble conduct of these gentlemen, she made such a good defence that the enemy was forced to raise the siege.

The Countess made her own retainer's list. She chose six Captains for their courage and integrity, desiring them to instruct and train her men, as they were unfit for martial service, and they received all their orders from Major Farmer, whom she had made Major of the house, whilst he in turn received his orders from her Ladyship. Farmer was a Scotchman, very skilful in the "art of war," having served in the low countries for some years, and was known as

a gallant and worthy man. He was afterwards killed at the battle of Marston Moor, when serving under Colonel Chifenhall.

The Countess of Derby had all the affairs of the house managed with great privacy and caution, allowing no one to go out of the gates, save those she could thoroughly trust, and upon whose honour she could rely. The officers and men-at-arms she so effectually concealed, that, when the enemy approached the house, they anticipated no resistance except from her own servants.

On the 28th February, Sir Thomas Fairfax sent a trumpeter and a gentleman of "quality" to desire a friendly interview with the Countess, which was granted, and the General came from Ormskirk to Lathom, and was civilly received by Charlotte. However, the Countess, who feared a sudden assault or surprise, had her soldiers drawn up in good order under their respective officers; the main guard in the first court, down to the great hall, where Sir Thomas Fairfax was to be received; the rest of the men were posted on the tops of the towers and along the walls, in a manner which made them appear more numerous than they really were. After a few words of greeting, the General informed her that he was commanded by the Parliament "to reduce that House to their obedience, and that he was commissioned to offer her Ladyship an honourable and safe removal with her children, servants, and all her goods (arms and cannon only excepted) to her Lord's house at Knowsley, and that she should enjoy one moiety of her Lord's estate in all places of England, for the support of herself and children."

The Countess spiritedly replied that she was left there under a double trust, one of faith and loyalty to her Lord, the other of allegiance and duty to her King, and that she would not yield the house until she had their consent to do so; for if she did it would be a manifest breach of trust to both, and she begged for a month in which to learn their good pleasure, adding, she would quietly yield if they so willed it, and begging him to excuse her for endeavouring to preserve her honour and obedience, though to her own ruin.

Sir Thomas Fairfax replied that, "it exceeded his commission to give her Ladyship any further respite for consideration than that one day," and so departed, noticing as he went the strength and situation of the house, and the masterly way in which the soldiers were disposed.

After the expiration of fourteen days, Fairfax and his officers resolved upon a close siege, and a trumpeter was sent with a summons for the surrender of Lathom House. To which the Countess returned the following answer: "That, as she had not lost her regard for the Church of England, nor her allegiance to her Prince, or her faith to her Lord, she could not, therefore, as yet give up that house; that they must never hope to gain it till she had either lost all these, or her life in defence of them."

Incensed at this answer, the besiegers pushed forward the siege with "great spite and malice," but the defenders were alert and gallant, and beat the enemy from their trenches several times, while a sally was made on the 12th of March, 1644, when about sixty of the Parliamentary soldiers were killed, and nearly as many more were made prisoners.

After this the besiegers doubled their levies about the house, and made a fresh trench close to the moat, wherein they placed a huge mortar-friese, sent from London, "from which they cast about fifty stones of fifteen inches diameter into the house; also grenades (bombshells) of the same size, the first of which, falling near the place where the lady and her children with all the commanders were sat at dinner, shivered all the room, but hurt nobody."

Finding this unpleasant, the heroic Countess ordered a sally, which was successfully executed by the garrison, who made themselves masters of the trenches, and "nailed up" or overturned the enemy's cannon, which they rolled into the moat, bringing the mortar-friese into the house.

During this sharp and sanguinary engagement the Countess was without the gates, sometimes quite close to the trenches, encouraging her soldiers by her presence, and displaying a manly courage, worthy of all admiration in her obstinate and determined defence. But the following night the enemy re-posessed themselves of the trenches, and the siege was continued with unabated vigour.

In the meantime the Earl of Derby, hearing of his wife's perilous position, hastened from the Isle of Man, and implored the King to relieve his distressed lady and children; whereupon his Majesty gave orders to Prince Rupert, who had just gained a victory over Cromwell's troops at Newark, to march through Lancashire on his way to the relief of York.

Colonel Rigby, fearing to encounter the Prince, raised the siege

and marched with his two thousand men to Bolton, when, with another thousand of horse and foot soldiers, he opposed Prince Rupert. On the 28th of May, 1644, the town was taken, no quarter being given. The victory was chiefly due to the energy and courage of the Earl of Derby, and Prince Rupert sent Sir Richard Lane, with all the colours taken there, to the Countess of Derby, who received them with pride, and had them hung up in Lathom House.

Later on in this same year the Earl returned to the Isle of Man, taking Charlotte and his children with him, where they spent a short time in peaceful happiness together, with their sons and daughters around them. But in 1645, when Lathom House was again besieged, we find the intrepid Countess once more defending her home against the enemy, her best marksmen placed in the towers to pick off the besiegers, her faithful retainers encouraged by the coolness and courage of this brave woman, who never shrank from exposing herself to the same risks that her soldiers ran, and who frequently appeared on the ramparts, never daunted or dismayed, but who encouraged and cheered all within the precincts of Lathom House.

Indeed, Charlotte de la Tremouille showed the skill of a general officer, and unparalleled bravery, for Lathom House was not yielded to the Parliamentary forces until Charles I. ordered her to surrender, and there were only 209 foot soldiers left in it, and all the horses but five had been eaten by the starving garrison.

The Earl and Countess then retired to the Isle of Man, but for some inexplicable reason their children did not go with them. After a while the younger members of the family were allowed to go to Knowsley by Sir Francis Fairfax, who behaved well to them ; but after twelve months, by an order of "bloody" President Bradshaw, they were all made prisoners and taken to Liverpool, their father being informed that if he would yield the Isle of Man they would be set free. He declined, sacrificing his parental feelings to his sense of duty, and they were kept prisoners for eighteen months.

In 1649, when the Earl was summoned by Ireton to surrender the Isle of Man, he returned this famous answer :

" I received your letter with indignation, and with scorn return you this answer : that I cannot but wonder whence you should gather any hopes that I should prove, like you, treacherous to my sovereign, since you cannot be ignorant of my former actions in his

late Majesty's service, from which principles of loyalty I am no whit departed; I abhor your treason and am so far from delivering up this Island to your advantage, that I shall keep it to the utmost of my power to your destruction. Take this for your final answer and forbear any farther solicitations, for, if you trouble me with any more messages of this nature, I will burn the paper and hang up the bearer. This is the immutable resolution, and shall be the undoubted practice, of him who accounts it his chiefest glory to be

His Majesty's most loyal and obedient servant,

Castletown, 12th July, 1649.

DERBY."

Situated some seven miles from Liverpool is Knowsley Park, another residence of the Earls of Derby, and which, though not so rich in historical interest as Lathom House, claims attention, as it is now the family residence of the Stanleys. It stands in a magnificent park, full of grand old forest monarchs. There are several lodges guarding the entrance to the Park, the chief of these being quite an imposing structure, and the quaint inscription "Bring good news and knock boldly," greets the visitor there.

For many centuries a splendid mansion has stood in this place, but the ninth Earl of Derby began to build the present magnificent structure, which was finally completed about 1820. There is a memorial on its south façade to Earl James and Charlotte, setting forth the cruel and ungrateful treatment they received at the hands of the "Merrie Monarch" Charles II.—"James, Earl of Derby, Lord of Man and the Isles, grandson of James, Earl of Derby, and Charlotte, daughter of Claude, Duc de la Tremouille, whose husband James, was beheaded at Bolton, 1651, for strenuously adhering to Charles II., who refused a Bill, passed unanimously by both houses of Parliament, for restoring to the family the estates lost by his loyalty to him (1732)."

The Stanleys have a splendid collection of pictures here, a series of family portraits well worthy of being studied by anyone interested in the history of the brave Charlotte, and which include some masterpieces of Rembrandt and Rubens. A portrait of the Earl painted by Vandyck is still in the possession of the family, while a fine portrait of the Countess by Rubens was in the possession of the Earl of Essex.

Notwithstanding the great wealth of the seventh Earl of Derby, James, while he was Lord Strange, and Charlotte his wife, in the

early days of their married life seem often to have been very much pressed for money, and unable to meet their liabilities through "delayed payments of moneys."

Of course all this was altered after his father's death, and he seems to have kept up an amount of state and magnificence, like his ancestors, that ran perilously near equalling his sovereign. A princely establishment was kept up at Lathom House. Burke, remarking on it says, "It surpassed for magnificence and hospitality all the residences of the North, assuming in these respects the attitude of a Royal Court, and its owners were so esteemed that the following inversion was often heard: "God save the Earl of Derby and the King."

The Earl's household, family and retainers, amounted to no less than a hundred and twenty souls. Naturally such a household required a large amount of food, and the family house accounts state that every week the consumption was one ox, twenty sheep, fifteen hogsheads of beer, besides venison, game and fish, while thirteen and a half tuns of wine were consumed in twelve months. "How have the mighty fallen," might have sighed the poor Countess in later years, when her gallant husband had given his life for his king, and she was alone, sad, desolate, and poor.

It was the selfishness of Charles II. that led to this noble pair's downfall and destruction. Charles, disappointed that the Scots did not join his army in great numbers, sent a dispatch to the Earl summoning him to England, and requesting him to meet him at Lancaster on the way to Worcester. His Lordship, always ready to serve his prince, left the Isle of Man, where hitherto he had maintained his independence, and brought with him three hundred retainers who had been with him in the Island. He also levied forces in Cheshire and Lancashire, and then marched towards the rendezvous. Unfortunately he was met by a strong detachment of the Parliamentary army, under Colonel Lilburn, in Wigan Lane, and being surrounded by a force far greater than his own, had to fight at terrible disadvantage. He had two horses killed under him, and received several wounds, but at last by dint of desperate valour he cut his way through the Roundheads, and managed to reach Wigan, where he lay concealed in a house for some time. Having got his wounds dressed he struggled on to Worcester.

In the meantime the king arrived at that city, tired and weary

with a forced and hasty march, to find to his dismay no troops to meet him, and no chance of augmenting the followers he had brought with him from his camp at Torwood.

On September 3rd, 1651, Cromwell fell upon Worcester with a large body of men, and meeting with hardly any resistance, broke the royalist forces and drove them back into the city, where the streets were soon strewn with the dead and wounded. The Earl of Derby had contrived to join the King, and though in great pain from his wounds, attended Charles closely throughout the whole fight. Cromwell called this battle of Worcester "Crowning Mercy."

Seeing the day was lost, the cavaliers crowded round Charles and persuaded him to fly. Mounted on a swift horse, he galloped through the ensanguined streets surrounded by a few friends, and hotly pursued by some of Cromwell's soldiers. He escaped through one of the city gates, for his cavaliers hastily overturned a huge hay-waggon after he had passed through, thus effectually blocking the gateway *pro tem.*, and preventing the Roundheads from following until they had removed the obstruction.

It was the Earl of Derby who, for the King's safety, persuaded Charles to separate himself from the rest of his companions, and who conducted him to Boscobel, a lone house on the borders of Staffordshire, where the King cut his hair short, changed his clothes, and was concealed by Richard Penderell (a Roman Catholic whom the Protestant monarch was assured he could trust).

Here the Earl left Charles and set out for Lancashire, with the intention, probably, of going to Lathom House; but unfortunately he was taken prisoner by Captain Edge, into whose hands he fell, and who gave him a promise of quarter, a promise afterwards most dishonourably violated. Bradshaw and his merciless myrmidons were determined to bring him to the scaffold. He was tried at Chester by twelve sequestrators, and sentence of death was passed on him for "trading by arms for Charles Stuart, defending Lathom House," etc., and he was ordered to be executed at Bolton.

While awaiting this unfair trial, he wrote to his distracted wife, then in the Isle of Man, a most touching letter, beginning: "My dearest heart," and ending: "so I rest everlastingly, your most faithful Derby."

From his dreary prison he also wrote a letter to his children, exhorting them to obey their mother and live godly lives.

Lord Strange rode post to London in hot haste, to try and save his father, and got his petition read in the junto by Mr. Leuthel; but Cromwell and Bradshaw knew not the quality of mercy, and he had to return to Bolton after his fruitless attempt. The gallant peer on his way to execution caught a glimpse of his weeping children on the roadside. At Knowsley one of the most precious relics is the chair in which he sat, while awaiting the headsman's fatal stroke. He was beheaded at Bolton on the 15th October, 1651. The next day his body was taken to Ormskirk, and there buried with his renowned ancestors.

At Chester there is a quaint old lath and plaster house, black and white magpie fashion, of Elizabethan type, called Stanley Palace, where it is said the Earl was in hiding for several weeks in a loft under the pointed roof, his place of concealment being known only to one faithful retainer, who brought him food. After the Earl's death, the Countess held the Isle of Man against all besiegers, and had the satisfaction of being the last person in the United Kingdom who yielded to the Parliamentary forces.

In the December following her husband's execution, she was compelled against her will to surrender the Island, and was imprisoned with her children, two of whom died in prison of smallpox, the Ned and Billy of the Earl's last letter.

Under all these crushing troubles Charlotte's courage at last broke down, and when liberated, she retired to Knowsley Hall, where she died on March 22nd, 1663.

The Isle of Man, which had been granted to Fairfax, was at length restored to the Stanleys, but not till many years after the Restoration.

Charlotte's eldest son, Charles, Lord Strange, married a German lady, Dorothea Helena Rupa. He died in 1672, and was succeeded by his son William, who died childless. The title then passed to William's younger brother James, who was the twenty-third Earl of Derby, and the eleventh of this family.

A Husband of the Philistine.

By K. SOLOMON.

SHE was thirty and he was thirty-five ; they were both old enough to have known better. But he was sick and tired of waiting patiently for what he considered Life owed him of happiness ; and decided to wrench it from the Fates at any cost. This determination came to him during the brief summer holiday, which, together with a modest £200 a year, represented the annual reward of much late and early toil in a dingy city office. His work had always been distasteful to him, and he had never been able to make any way in it. He had once begun to read for the bar, but at the right time means had not been forthcoming, and his father had jumped at an opening offered him in a friend's office, with hints of future promotion. This promotion may be presumed to have attained early achievement, for after a small increase in his salary at the end of the first three years, nothing further happened. And arrived at the verge of middle life, he found himself as far off from the longed-for haven of married happiness, as when he took his seat for the first time on that stool in the back office, and hope loomed large in the mists of futurity.

He had pictured to himself in dreams a woman with the face of a Madonna and a soul immaculate, that represented to his imagination the highest feminine idea. This he had hoped to see one day embodied in the mistress of his heart and household. But he had told himself long since that not for him was the luxury of wife and child ; and he had been reduced to satisfy his desire for feminine communion in a society that was the reverse of ideal.

All this was forgotten, and the old fair dream came back to him that summer, when he met Edith Loftus at a boarding-house on the South Coast, and watched her soothing tendance of the old and invalid among its inmates. He thought how good it would be to have those soft white hands to smooth his hair and touch his forehead, and he felt the tone of her voice thrill through him like a caress. She possessed little so-called beauty, but the way her hair grew low upon her forehead, and the look in the mild brown eyes, recalled the Madonna of his dreams. And he took for granted that

her nature was expressed in her appearance. Its large maternity seemed to impress itself indeed on every action and speech. About her presence was an atmosphere of home, and all who came in contact with her felt the spell.

Our city clerk walked with her in the mornings through the pine-woods, and at evening on the cliffs by the sea shore; and never before had he realised the beauty that was in life and in the world. He thought to discover a wonderful harmony in their sentiments and opinions; and the discovery gave his own an added dignity.

As his holiday drew near to its close he became aware that parting would be a positive calamity. His asking her to marry him seemed rather a matter of necessity than of choice. He, who had held that to take any but a rich wife would be a suicidal act on his part, was not now troubled by any question of prudence. She had told him of the tiny income that came to her in half-yearly dividends, and this, added to his own earnings would, he believed, enable them to avoid the dreaded contingency of matrimony in lodgings.

Edith Loftus was glad enough to accept his offer. The prospect of home and a husband's love appealed to her strongly after many years of orphaned life. She had no hankering after fine clothes or expensive pleasures, and had had long practice in making a little money do the work of a great deal.

And the experiment was in the early days a great success. Our city clerk starting in the morning from his bright little home in Croydon, felt for the first time in his life, perhaps, that God was in his heaven and all well with the world.

But life refused to be coaxed for him into permanent smoothness. One baby came, and then another, and the want of elasticity about his income interfered with his appreciation of the parental position. Edith, looking up from her cradle with a divine joy in her eyes, met his glance resting on her and them, and the trouble in it leaped into her own. In spite of all her economies there was a little pile of unpaid bills in the corner cupboard, and some of her own once punctual dividends had ceased to put in an appearance. Things grew worse instead of better. Edith wrung her hands—on which tears were falling fast at thought of the pale drawn face that tried to smile at her a morning farewell, as she stood by the window, a babe in her arms and another by her side. The thought that it was marriage with her—with her who had learnt to love him so dearly—

which had brought this trouble upon him, was an added sting. Once in his presence she had broken into incontrollable weeping, and had spoken to him of her sorrow and self reproach. He had drawn her to him, and had whispered that the boon of her presence was worth many other deprivations, and that his love for, and belief in, her had been the one good thing in his life.

Yet the desire to bring material help to her husband, took firm root in her mind, and it seemed to her at last that she had found a way. She would try if her pen could not be made a golden key to fortune's fickle favour. Though unsuspecting her own artistic talent, she had always allowed her fancy free play with all the surrounding life that passed before her; and keen sympathetic insight had revealed the hidden meanings and possibilities of things, sometimes only half heard, half seen. Now she looked back across the years, and, as she looked mists rolled away, and faces and events stood out in clear relief.

It was among those memories, themselves part fancies, that she searched for the subject of her story. It came without much seeking! Her heart had always gone out to the unhappy and the fallen, and her tale dealt with the life of a woman among these. She brought to her work the garnered thoughts and sentiments of an inarticulate past, and her pen ran on swiftly as she bent over her secret task with flushed cheeks and hopeful eyes. As she wrote, her own identity, her own troubles were lost and forgotten. She was the woman of her story, and wept her tears of shame and sorrow, and so it was that she breathed into her creation the breath of life.

Each day as she put the manuscript back into its hiding-place, she felt she was bringing help nearer to her husband and little ones; and to herself perhaps something might accrue, which, though unsought and undesired, might yet be worth the winning.

At length the morning arrived when she wrote *finis* at the end of her manuscript, and reading it from beginning to end was filled with the conviction that her work was good. She could scarcely endure to wait till evening to show it to her husband, and reveal her cherished secret. She pictured his delight at the prospect of relief from such an unexpected source. He must love her more than ever in the future, for pride in her talent would be an additional claim to his love. Perhaps of late he had found her less sympathetic; she had caught him sometimes looking curiously at her. Certainly the

belief that the hour of release was at hand, had made it difficult for her to attune her spirit to his sadness. But to-night there would be an explanation, and joy would return to the sad household.

Dinner was over in the little house at Croydon, and Edith sat at her husband's feet looking up into his face, while he read the carefully written lines of her manuscript. Her cheeks were pink, and a smile lingered on her lips, but there was keen anxiety in the eyes that awaited the verdict. For a long time the only sound in the room was the turning of pages—then followed silence. The manuscript had fallen from her husband's hand on to the carpet, and he sat with his head averted, looking into the fire. The colour had gone from her face, and her mouth quivered. "Dearest! won't you speak? Does not my story please you?"

There was a sob in her voice as she spoke, and laid a caressing hand on his arm. He shook it off impatiently and got up from his chair, gazing down upon her with a strange expression on his face, and her frightened eyes fell at the stern and alien look.

"What have I done?" she murmured.

He made no reply, but began pacing up and down the room. Then he turned towards her.

"Edith! in all my trouble I thought at least I had you. I believe I have almost worshipped you as a type of the highest and best. And now—this story! Edith! where did you learn these thoughts, these feelings? The woman is alive—she is yourself! As I read I seem to hear your voice saying terrible things—to see your smile in her eyes. It is like a horrible nightmare."

And he threw himself again on his chair, and covered his eyes with his hand. Edith, on her knees beside him, employed all her eloquence in explanation of the nature of the artistic imagination—of the necessity of the author's identification with his creations; but all the time she realised he would never understand. Then, sick at heart, she took the precious story that was to have meant so much to both of them and burnt it before his eyes. Yet even as she watched the cruel flames consume the sacrifice, she felt it had been made in vain, that henceforth a lasting shadow, dividing her from all that made life yet worth the living—her husband's love—had fallen athwart their lives.

From Hell Corner to Botany Bay.

By H. B. NEDHAM.

IN these days of cycles and motor-cars there certainly seems to be more of an Australian than a cockney ring about the heading of this article—a suggestion of the Bush and the convict settlements of “old time” colonial history. For all that, on a beautifully executed map of London, published in Waterloo year by William Darton, of Holborn, the name Hell Corner figures as that of a locality just touching Kensington Square, whilst Botany Bay was to be found on the *then* extreme north-east of the metropolis, by anyone caring to penetrate as far afield as the wilds of Hackney. Hell Corner, with its evil name and out-of-the-way position, reminds us that the great western highway, between Kensington and Knightsbridge, was the scene of many a daring outrage by footpads well into the present century, and such was the very lawless state of things, that until somewhere about 1830 a bell was rung every Sunday evening at Kensington, as a signal for visitors returning to town to assemble together for greater protection. At the period alluded to the whole district west of Sloane Street, was, with the exception of the Brompton Road and a few adjoining thoroughfares, practically unbuilt upon, and snipe and woodcock were often bagged by cockney sportsmen in the vicinity. Much of this area indeed remained market-gardens and orchards, intersected by narrow lanes with well trimmed hedges, until late in the sixties, and more than one unfortunate victim was robbed in these very lanes during the famous garotting epidemic, which was only finally put down by the summary infliction of the cat. During the Regency, the ground extending from Vauxhall Bridge to Hyde Park was in much the same condition, and we read that “Old Q” went out snipe shooting in the neighbourhood of the Monster Tea Gardens, a former holiday resort, which derived its name from a monastery, and is now commemorated by a ’bus service and a tavern. Our old pocket map indicates the fact that there were no Pimlico squares. Eaton Square was little better than a marsh, and the dukedom of Westminster did not as yet exist.

However, peregrinating eastward we presently pass the site of the Half Way House, a roadside hostelry of ugly repute for robbers and nightbirds, which stood near the present position of Prince's Gate until 1846. Hyde Park has indeed a history. Formerly an abbey manor, it saw its races under the Stuarts. Here it was that Cromwell was, more than once, within an inch of his death at the hands of plotters, and here it was that the Duke of Hamilton, and Lord Mohun, were killed in the famous duel, wherein the latter, in all probability, figured as a bravo along with Macartney, in a scheme of deliberate murder concocted by some of the Whigs of Marlborough's party. The condition of Hyde Park was so wild down to the present century, that as late as 1798 a woman named Sarah Grey was granted a pension of £18, because her husband had been accidentally shot by the keepers hunting *foxes*. Soldiers were continually being executed for desertion or other offences, and duels of a fatal character occurred within living memory.

Still steering east, we reach the top of Piccadilly, and remark on our chart a yellow line stretching from Carlton House to Oxford Street, showing "intended improvements" to be called Waterloo Place and Regent Street, names reminding us of the Iron Duke's recent "crowning victory," and of the fact that the old King George the Third became at last so hopelessly blind and insane, that he had to yield up the reins to the graceless "First Gentleman of Europe." Hard by is the French colony of Soho. Time was when we risked a meal advertised as "diner for four pences," somewhere near the south end of Dean Street. Alas! where now is that humble resort of hungry Communists? Not many minutes' walk thence was another restaurant, kept by one who took an active part under the Red Flag in Paris in '71. More than once we have supped on the excellent fare supplied by the *patron*, whose whispered association with barricades and worse added grim zest to our Bohemian appetites. Leicester Square, with its memories of Peter the Great, Prince Eugène, John Hunter, Reynolds and Hogarth, is indeed worth a volume all to itself. A prominent feature of the old "Fields" was the quaint equestrian statue of George the First. Some Londoners may remember having seen this decorated, pigtail, horse, and all, with a brand new coat of black and white paint, the outcome of midnight skylarking. To the juvenile mind it seemed as if some daring rocking-horse painter had committed high treason,

but on the whole it was considered a very well grounded protest, and it was the forerunner of much needed reform.

Having threaded our way through the aforetime aristocratic Seven Dials, we find ourselves in Holborn, the old highway for the gallows-cart from Newgate to Tyburn. It is curious that although the last Tyburn execution was as late as 1783, the precise whereabouts of the Golgotha is uncertain, some authorities locating the site at the Park corner, others at Connaught Square. On our left is the Old Bell with its quaint galleried inn yard, and its next-door neighbour the Black Bull, where, according to Betsy Prig, "the drinks is all good." And soon Newgate confronts us, grim and forbidding—a fit place of doom for the murderer. But others than murderers have been executed here. Between 1805 and 1818, over two hundred poor wretches were hanged for forgery alone, and a hundred thousand spectators would assemble to witness perhaps a dozen of their fellow-creatures swung off simultaneously. The aristocracy set the example, for the Wynns and the Pagets would hire rooms at the George, and enjoy the show in right good sort. In 1815, Elizabeth Fenning was hanged for poisoning. Her innocence was almost universally believed in, and her corpse was carried to the grave by six girls dressed in white. In a prettily laid out garden to the west of Gray's Inn Road her monument may be seen, not far from that erected to the memory of a granddaughter of Oliver Cromwell.

Our antipodean guest now takes us through Bishopsgate. The name of Spitalfields is perhaps a survival of the days when leprosy was common enough, and hospitals for its treatment a necessity. Here again is a French colony, where the English-speaking silk-worker or shop-keeper answers to the name of White, or Carey, or Masters, instead of Le Blanc, or Carré, or Le Maître of his Huguenot ancestry. The Hackney Road of four score years since, brought one soon among the green fields, and here right away on the very edge of London was the whereabouts of Botany Bay.

What a difference between then and now! In the east the district beyond Mile End was, to all intents and purposes, rural. The Isle of Dogs was a square mile of marsh, seven feet below high water level. In the north, St Pancras and Islington must have been more country-like than the neighbourhood of Muswell Hill is to-day. Paddington and Bayswater were almost streetless. South of the

Thames it was the same in many localities which are now thickly populated. Is not the name of Cherry Gardens a relic of this bygone aspect of the river-side? Deptford still had its "King's Dockyard," and Greenwich Hospital still sheltered the old tars, many of whom perhaps had lost a limb or two under Nelson, or maybe under that fire-eating sailor and racy novelist Marryat. Our map only shows half a dozen bridges spanning the Thames, but one spot of gloomy significance is plainly indicated, namely Execution Dock, where so many followers of the Jolly Roger met their doom, their bodies afterwards sun-drying in chains at Bugsby's Hole, Blackwall.

Certainly our forefathers, who played cricket in chimneypots at Lord's, caught salmon in the Thames, and knew nothing of railways, steamboats, county-councils, or school-boards, would be astonished if they could see how the builder and the engineer, and the rapid growth of the population, have changed the London of the Regency into the modern Babylon of nowadays. And still the expansion of the mighty metropolis goes on apace. Old landmarks are ruthlessly swept away, and new suburbs spring up with mushroom-like quickness. This should increase our reverence for what we have left of the historic past. The very railings of St. Paul's Cathedral, made in the Weald of Kent, are an object lesson on the shifting of the iron industries from the south to the north. A cannon standing as a doorpost elsewhere, may be a memento of one of brave old Rodney's sea-fights. The human leather on a chapel door of Westminster Abbey—made from the skins of burglarious priests flayed alive—is a gruesome memorial of the times when Westminster had its monks, and the spoiler, Henry the Eighth, had not yet given rise to a proverb, by taking from the shrine of Saint Peter to give to that of Saint Paul. But how few up-to-date Londoners know these things, or care one jot about the romance of the great city they dwell in and fancy they are so familiar with!

Notices of New Books.

IN these days when we are so lavishly supplied with fiction of every kind, it is difficult to decide which books are worthy of attention. There can, however, be little doubt that Mr. Anthony Hope's "PHROSOPHOS" (Methuen & Co.) ranks among the first of last month's publications. Mr. Hope writes with his usual charm and vivacity, and the fact that the plot and scene in "PHROSOPHOS" are laid among Turkish possessions, and that the Greek inhabitants play so important a part in the romance, certainly lends an additional interest to the perusal of the book just now, though the fascinating penmanship of its author is without doubt the greatest attraction. It is wonderful to observe how our excitement is retained from the first page to the last, though we never feel the situation to be strained. Perhaps, when we have finished the book, we may have to admit that though a thoroughly good story, "the facts are of course quite impossible," but romance is romance all the world over, and let us rather be thankful that though such miraculous adventures are beyond the reach of nineteenth century civilization, we have among us one who can clothe the romantic with such marvellous semblance of life.

A very handy volume has just been issued by Mr. G. Haderer, of Leipsig. It is the first of the series of what, we suppose, will ultimately comprise a "LIST OF LIBRARIES" of the world. The present number includes about 600 of the libraries of the United States and Canada, and the volume to follow will deal with those of Great Britain. Such a work must be of peculiar interest to the bibliophile, and it naturally commends itself to the seller of books. We cannot but congratulate the enterprising publisher on the neatness of style, the good printing, and the well-planned arrangement of the works. The owners of the Libraries come in alphabetical order, with the number of volumes in library set opposite each name, while a short and concise paragraph states the contents, and points out any specialities in the different collections. At the end of the book there is an index of places, and an exhaustive analysis, in which the subjects of each library are carefully set forth. All this information is given in three languages—English, French and German, in separate columns on every page. Altogether the work gives proof of much careful thought and great labor.

E. R.

LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COST OF A WEDDING RING.

It was given out that Lady Falconer was confined to her room with a bad cold, and the announcement was received with every appearance of true sympathy, especially by Townshend-Rivers.

“So imprudent to go out in an open carriage so late in the year as this,” he remarked to Lady Crosby, as they were sitting side by side at dinner.

“I don’t suppose she had ever done such a thing before,” Millie said, demurely, as she consumed a few mouthfuls of clear soup.

“Well, I don’t know about that; as a rule, women are far more imprudent than men. I hope she is not delicate on her chest.”

“Perhaps she is delicate in her temper,” she said in a low voice. “I should be if I were married to that man,” with a mischievous glance across the table at Falconer.

At the same moment, Lady Malvern leant forward and addressed her nephew. “If you are at all anxious about your wife, I can send a groom at once for Dr. Robins.”

Falconer looked down at his soup-plate, and said gruffly, “Not at all necessary, thanks. I am not in the least anxious.”

“Anxious? No. I bet that he never is anxious about anybody except himself,” muttered Hugh to his neighbour, Major Mortimer.

“Selfish brute,” agreed the Major. “Some women are never satisfied until they get hold of a regular devil.”

“Lady Falconer’s not that sort.”

"And yet she had him."

"His cursed good looks did it."

Major Mortimer smiled, and pulled his moustaches, as he glanced at Millie Crosby, on the other side of him. If he had been an ugly man, she would have turned a cold shoulder on him at once, and never troubled herself to think twice about him. He was perfectly aware of this, and yet it did not lower her in his estimation, though he thought Lady Falconer "a poor little fool" for loving a man for the same reason.

"You must not judge her," Pemberton broke out after a pause. "My uncle tells me that there was a conspiracy of silence amongst all *his* relations. They were keen about getting him settled, and they did not care for anything else. An infernal shame!"

"It's being done every day of the week. The 'Marriages made in Heaven' theory is about exploded in the nineteenth century," he said carelessly, thankful that he himself was free from the tangles and perplexities of married life; and yet the next moment he was talking to the lovely Millie and imagining himself in despair because of Sir Digby's undoubted existence.

Hugh had to give the rest of his attention to Mrs. Jocelyn, whose temper had been upset by waiting half an-hour for dinner; but he was in a state of uncomfortable anxiety about Beatrice. He had seen her at five o'clock tea, and noticed no sign of cold or indisposition of any sort. He was, therefore, convinced that the cold was a fiction, to cover something serious in the background. He kept studying the husband's face as the wife's was out of reach, and every now and then he was favoured with an angry stare, as if Falconer especially resented his silent scrutiny. As he was the only old friend that Beatrice had in the house, he felt a certain responsibility about her, and yet it was almost impossible for him to help her in any way, without giving rise to invidious remarks. If he had been old and haggard instead of young and *not* hideous, his position would have been safe enough; but if he stood forth as her champion it was absolutely certain that his motives would be suspected, and no one amongst that frivolous set would credit him with being a simple old friend, and not a lover.

Whilst many people were speculating about her—some kindly, others curiously, some audaciously, others carelessly—Beatrice was sitting in the welcome solitude of a small sitting-room, which

opened out of her dressing-room, and belonged to her own suite of rooms. There she could be safe from all interruption. She could pace up and down in her wild despair, or fling herself face downwards on the sofa, without any curious eye to watch and wonder. Her mind had recovered from its stagnation, her brain was in a whirl of bitter anger, and frantic disappointment—the tranquil unthinking peace of girlhood had gone for ever. A cyclone had passed over her young life, and prematurely withered all its verdure. What had been a garden stocked with richest blossoms and choicest fruits, was now nothing but an empty waste. The change was so startling that at first she could not think connectedly. From her childhood she had been treated with nothing but considerate love, the most careful tenderness. If she did naughty things, as any child with a scrap of spirit must occasionally, she was scolded with gravity and gentleness, that made her at once deeply penitent for her faults and willing to hear any punishment. Nobody had ever stormed at her, or accused her of falsehood, meanness or deceit, until her husband initiated her into this unpleasant experience. Her own husband—there was the sharpest poison of the sting—the man whom she had loved so idiotically, and to whom she had actually given the preference over all her other friends. Not only had he been guilty of an abominable action, not only had he seemed to be perfectly callous about the blasting effect of this action—but he had also thought *her* capable of conduct that was mean and detestable; and moreover thought her so, without the smallest excuse for the accusation. Her tenderest, holiest feelings had been used by him like a field to be ploughed, for he had driven the harrow over them all. They were deeply scarred, and the scar would remain till her life ended. Mental or moral scars are just as long-lived as the physical ones which, as scientists tell us, endure through all the changes of an organic body. She could never forget what she had heard of the past. Must she live in constant dread of the future? Any day there might be another case like Gerald de Winton's, or another scene like that of this afternoon. She shuddered as she thought of it, not with fear, but with the still worse shiver of disgust and loathing. Her first wild impulse was to go to her father, like a wounded bird to its nest. She cared for nothing but to put miles between herself and her husband. To get away from him to some

safe place where he would not venture to come near her, that was her only object. Her face softened as she thought of the home where she would always be so dearly welcome, where such never-failing love was always waiting for her. A home where cruelty and coarseness were unknown quantities—a home where the door was shut sternly in the face of vice, but opened its widest to admit the bent form of sorrow or misfortune. Yes, she would go there and find a shelter from the storm—this unexpected, monstrous storm which had overwhelmed her. The first thing to-morrow, she would send off a telegram to her father, and follow it by the next train. Lady Malvern was good at lies. She could invent any plausible fiction she chose to explain her niece's sudden journey, but as for herself, she would start before all the lazy people came downstairs, and so avoid any inconvenient questions. Stopping in her incessant tramp up and down the room, she went to her writing-case—a very smart one, which had come amongst her wedding presents—to find a form; but when found, and when her pen was already dipped in the ink, she hesitated. "Duty" was the Bishop's watch-word. What would he say to her if she ran away from her husband, because she discovered that he was a very different man to the one she had created out of her own fancy? Would not he tell her that she had married Herbert Clifford, Earl of Falconer, the real man—not the imaginary hero—that she had sworn to love, honour and obey him? If love were worn-out-reverence and impossibility—he would tell her that obedience remained—and he would send her back. She could see the pained look in his kind strong face, she could hear the sorrowful tone in his musical voice. It would cost him an immense effort, but if he thought it his duty to show her hers, he would do it at any cost. "Poor old Daddy, it would break his heart to see me to-day!" Tears filled her eyes as she thought of him—the father who had never come down by the slightest fraction from the pedestal on which she had placed him in her motherless childhood. She thought of her wedding morning when he had begged her to give up Falconer at the last moment, if she had the slightest doubt of him. Many men would have shrunk from the fuss and the gossip which would have been the inevitable consequences of such a sensational rupture, but he counted them as nothing in comparison with his child's happiness. Oh, why had she ever been such an idiot as to leave him!

Long she sat there thinking—thinking—till the burthen of her thoughts grew too much for her. She could not go downstairs to seek distraction, she could not read, because in the present absorbed state of her mind, no book would have made the smallest impression on her. A longing for fresh air came upon her—the room seemed too confined. She went to one of the windows, undid the shutter, unfastened one side of the window and flung it open. The cold air was delightful, and she thrust her hot head out as far as she could stretch. It was a dark cloudy night, without a single star to act as a beacon of hope; but the wild restlessness that possessed her was calmed by the sight of that wide landscape to which there seemed to be no limit in the enshrouding darkness. It was a comfort to look, and look, and feel no tiresome, blocking barrier like the delicately painted walls of her room. God seemed to be nearer to her and man further off; and yet man was very near. As her eyes went from the starless cloud-covered vault above, to the garden below, she saw a very mundane star—the lighted end of a cigar—which seemed to have come to a standstill under her window. Somebody was watching her—what detestable impertinence! Could she not be alone even in the privacy of her own room? As she drew back indignantly the cigar was thrown on the gravel, and the man who had been smoking it, stepped forward, and looking first to right and left, lifted up his face, so that she could indistinctly see a chin and the end of a fair moustache. And then came a cautious whisper; “Can I do anything for you, Bee?”

It was Hugh—faithful old Hugh! He had been anxious about her—he had not forgotten her, though no one else seemed to care. Her heart softened tenderly to her old friend, her chest heaved. A sudden sob came in her throat. But she would not be pitied even by him. She leant out once again. “Lady Malvern said I had a cold. I am trying to make it true. Good night,” she called out hurriedly.

Then she closed the window, and the shutter, and disappeared from sight.

Tears had come at last—a perfect avalanche of long pent-up feelings set loose by the touch of sympathy. She was not given to crying, as so many women are on the slightest excuse, but having begun, she seemed now as if she meant to drown the world.

There were voices on the terrace, but she heard nothing of them,

and when the vehemence of the out-flow had ceased, exhausted by having passed through such a phase of intense emotion in the space of a few hours, she fell asleep, and found some peace at last in unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FALCONER IS UNCOMFORTABLE.

WHEN Lady Falconer shut the window and put an abrupt ending to any conversational intentions, Captain Pemberton was seriously alarmed. The action was so unlike her, for Beatrice was always rather loquacious, and he had known her hang her head out of a railway-carriage till the last moment, in her eagerness to carry on a chat, whilst he ran the whole length of a platform to catch what she said. As she did not want to talk, she had something to hide—and what that something was, he was very keen to find out. He stopped still to light a fresh cigar, and as he did so, his figure and even his profile were plainly visible to the amused eyes of Townshend-Rivers.

“Oh, oh,” thought he, “my Lady has her consolations like other people.”

* * * *

Falconer having failed in getting anyone to play either cards or billiards with him, was going off to bed, when a wisp of paper twisted into an abnormal form and directed to himself attracted his attention as it lay by the side of the last remaining silver candlestick. He recognised his aunt's pointed handwriting, and, prepared for a concentrated pill of abuse, opened it slowly. It was short but to the point and as he read it, his face flushed hotly.

“Please remember that your room is in the East corridor, No. 73. Your man has moved your things for you, by my orders.

HORATIA DOROTHEA MALVERN.”

A curse broke from him—one of the ready oaths in which he so often indulged—and then he stood quite still digesting the pill. How was he to take it? He had the right to do exactly as he chose without being dictated to by an interfering old woman, but the arrangement was convenient for him from one side of the question—decidedly convenient—for it staved off the meeting with

his wife till the next day, and allowed him time to make up his mind as to his future line of conduct. But whether it suited him or not, he held that his aunt had not the smallest right to interfere, and pushing open the door of the billiard-room, he sat down in an arm-chair to think over his grievances. The room looked intensely desolate by the light of his single candle. All the lamps had been put out by a sleepy footman, who was thankful to be able to take it for granted that the gentlemen were not going to play that night. He had covered up the table, replaced the cues in their proper stand, and extinguished the lamps; but having been called away before he completed his operations, the silver stand, with whiskey and brandy in its decanters, was left upon a side-table. Falconer stretched out his arm and poured himself out some brandy. As he raised the glass to his lips his eye fell upon a pocket-book lying open on the floor. There were one or two letters half-hidden under the case which had evidently opened as it dropped from its owner's hand or pocket, and amongst these letters there was a photograph. The case was now deplorably shabby, but it had once been quite a dandy one, and as a relic of its past splendour there was still a silver monogram on it, the prevailing letter of which was a capital P. Falconer picked it up, and gathered its contents together with the intention of replacing them inside the cover. His hand was not as steady as it might be, and the photograph slipped between his fingers down on to the carpet. He stooped and picked it up again, holding it close to the candle, in a sudden access of curiosity. He did not notice the monogram, and he had a vague idea that the pocket-book belonged to the Major, and that the *carte-de-visite* was probably the fair Millie's. His expression changed however as he stared at the girl's beautiful face—a face radiant with youth, and hope and happiness. Underneath was the signature in the bold hand that he knew so well, "Your old friend, 'Bee.'" "Bee" the very name he called her by himself when he was in the best of tempers, or wanted to get over her in any way! And this photograph was the property of another man—not Mortimer—but *Pemberton*. He knew whose it was in a moment, before the address on those letters told him that he was right.

"CAPTAIN HUGH PEMBERTON,

King's Dragoon Guards, Aldershot."

There it was—curse him! His own wife's—and this other fellow

carried it with him to India and back—down to Aldershot and up to Warwickshire, wherever he went. He clenched his teeth in wild unreasoning rage. He knew as well as anyone else that girls give their photographs right and left to anyone who chooses to ask for them. This one had been taken when Beatrice could not have been more than sixteen. She was dressed in serge with Eton jacket and plain skirt, her sailor hat was lying on the table, and she had a racket in her hand as if she had just come in from a game of tennis. Falconer remembered that Pemberton had given Beatrice a racket for a wedding present, and that she made a point of using it whenever she played. This was another grievance. She looked a happy light-hearted girl, without a care in the world, and Pemberton would think of the days when he knew her best, when she was always bright and cheerful as girls are who have nothing to worry them, and contrast the Beatrice of two years ago with the married woman of to-day. Well, she was his wife, not Pemberton's—he had beaten him there—and Beatrice had given him her whole heart when she married him, so it was no use for the other fellow to go on hankering. In fact it was cursed impudence to carry this likeness in his pocket as if the original belonged to him. By—— he should never do it again, and with a grim smile he held the photograph to the flame of the candle until it was entirely consumed. It was only a bit of card-board, but he felt as if he were committing a murder, as the pretty face, the girlish figure, the small hand holding the racket, shrivelled up and disappeared. In his anxiety to destroy it entirely, he held on to it till the flame actually scorched the tip of his thumb, and then, letting go, he dropped the fragments, which singed the carpet and made a horrible smell of burning.

Just at that moment, Morris, who was popularly supposed never to go to bed, put his grave face in at the half-open door. "Beg pardon, my Lord, but is anything on fire?" looking suspiciously at him.

"Nothing, Morris—I'm just off to bed," and rising with a yawn, he took up his candle and walked past the butler into the passage, without condescending to make any explanation.

"Up to no good, I'll bet five pounds," Morris said to himself, as he explored the empty room. There was no love lost between him and his Mistress's nephew, and if he could have found anything to his discredit, it would have been sure to reach Lady Malvern's ears with her morning coffee.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHESTNUT BOLTS.

EXPECTATION was on the *qui vive* the next day, but nothing transpired. Lord Falconer and several of the men, failing any other sort of sport, were engrossed in a rat hunt in the stables. Lady Crosby, determined not to be left out, looked down at them from a window, and made absurd bets with the Major as to the rival exploits of different ferrets.

Beatrice heard wild bursts of laughter coming from the back regions, as she came down to luncheon; and presently the whole party emerged through a swing door, and turned their steps towards her with anxious enquiries after her health. Without looking at him, she saw her husband amongst them, and a slight colour spread over her white cheeks, but she took no notice of him. He was relieved to see that instead of playing the part of an ill-used wife, she looked particularly brilliant, with sparkling eyes, and smiling lips.

"I hope your long rest did you good," Hugh Pemberton slipped in amongst the other inquiries, whilst Falconer stood on one side, feeling uncomfortable, and afraid of saying anything.

"None at all," with a little laugh, "I was literally bored to death."

"If you had only sent me a message, I would have serenaded you from the terrace," Townshend-Rivers affirmed, though he played on no instrument at all—not even the banjo.

"Why didn't you? I should have loved it." Then she threw a cheerful glance over Lady Crosby's head to Pemberton, "I want to do something wild this afternoon. Will you help me?"

"Won't I? What shall it be?"

"Imagine something whilst we have our lunch."

"I'll think it over whilst I wash my hands," and he darted up the stairs as the gong began to sound. The rest of the rat hunting party followed, and with them departed Lady Falconer's fictitious gaiety.

It was a weary face that Morris encountered when he came to tell Beatrice that her Ladyship was in the dining-room; but it changed again as quickly as a kaleidoscope, and Lady Malvern, watching her with kindly eyes, as she sat near her at the long table, was delighted to see how bravely she was carrying herself, and she had known

many mean moments in the course of her long life, of which nobody guessed anything except Morris—Morris, who like a faithful dog asked no questions, but gave devoted service whenever it was needed.

Outside he looked like an automaton with a machine-made face-pattern of "the highly respectable and self-respecting butler type;" but his mistress knew that nothing escaped his eye, and that he had an intuitive perception of the right thing to be done at any moment.

With a countenance as impassive as a sea-mew's, he stood behind Lady Malvern's chair, and whilst seemingly intent on directing the movements of the numerous footmen, he saw that Lady Falconer was playing a part and doing it exceedingly well, that she was surprising the other guests by her wit and vivacity, and charming first one and then another by the sweetness of her smiles, not one of which was spared to her husband. There he sat, sullen and unamused in the midst of the laughter and fun, discussing the merits of a newly invented gun with as much interest as if he had been the original patentee, but all the while watching his wife with the intentness of a paid spy.

He would have understood her so much better if she had crawled downstairs like a half crushed worm, and preserved a blighted appearance for the rest of the day. Then he would have followed her into some quiet corner, given her a kiss, and told her to cheer up; and they might have jogged on together as if nothing had happened. But now she was riding the high horse, and she would make it kick out if he went too near its heels. He felt ridiculously afraid of her; and, when the whole party moved into the hall, he actually lacked the courage to go up and ask her before them all what plans she had made for the afternoon. After eager consultations Lady Malvern was called in for advice and permission, and as she gave them both amiably, all difficulties were cleared away. It was settled that Captain Pemberton and Major Mortimer should have a tandem race on the high road. The course was to be two miles long—the start from the large iron gates of the park—the finish on a line with a decayed windmill no longer at work, which stood close to the hedge at a corner where four roads met, and the pace never to exceed a fast trot. Pemberton was to be accompanied by Lady Falconer, the Major by Millie Crosby. There was an immediate adjournment to the stables, where two carts were found of precisely the same build—the only difference being that the one was

shabbier than the other. The choice of horses took much longer, but as daylight would wait for nobody, they had to be as quick over it as possible.

"Aunt, do you think I ought to allow this?" Falconer asked, as he followed Lady Malvern to the foot of the broad staircase. His anger was rising rapidly, and if she had only encouraged him, he would have flown into a violent rage.

She stopped and looked up at him, with one small foot poised on the first step, her thin, much beringed hand clinging to the bannister. "There is no shame in you," she said coolly. "Have you forgotten yesterday? Allow her to stand on her head if she wants to—you can't say anything."

"But how long is this to go on?" he asked angrily. "It's amusing work stepping out of my own place in order that a confounded idiot may take it."

"Pshaw! What nonsense!" contemptuously. "Be thankful that she has chosen the safest man in the house for her fling. Geoffrey Talbot comes to-night, and he—— But I can't wait or the race will be over before I get there. You can drive me in the phaeton if you like," and she hurried up the stairs at an unusual pace, for her sporting instincts were still as keen as when she lost or won her thousands over every Derby that was run.

Townshend-Rivers rode down the road, and took up his post at the corner by the windmill. Lady Malvern's phaeton was drawn up at the end of a lane to the right; whilst a crowd of idlers belonging to the estate had gathered on the left, and more were continually running up as the news spread that some bit of fun was coming off amongst the company at the Hall. Townshend-Rivers was brimming over with cynical remarks about the chances of the race, but the point had to be taken off them because of Falconer's presence.

Of course such an opportunity for making or losing money could not be wasted, and many bets were made on the issue of the race, most of the men backing Mortimer, because they had doubts as to Pemberton's leader.

"If there's a spill I shall never forgive myself," Lady Malvern remarked when she was tired of waiting. She was rarely nervous—having often declared that nerves are the outcome of affectation; but to-day it occurred to her that it would be just like a three-volume

novel if Beatrice were to be killed before the eyes of her husband, and she began to think it was probable.

"They will only have their own folly to thank for it," rejoined Falconer who had never been anxious about anybody but himself.

"Possibly, but that would be small consolation for either of us," she said drily; and then she began to fidget about the rest of the guests who came up in anything they could lay hold of, and took a long time in getting into positions where they could see, and yet be out of the competitors' way.

Lady Malvern called to Mr. Townshend-Rivers, in a shrill voice to clear the course, as a waggon came in view. After a little talk, he persuaded the waggoner to draw up under the hedge without coming any further. This he was really quite willing to do, as his time belonged to his master, and his sporting instincts to himself. At the last moment, Mrs. Jocelyn arrived in a great flurry, seated in a farm cart driven by her devoted admirer, General Mannering, who now that he had retired from the army, had time to make advances amongst the fair sex.

"Just like Agneta," snapped Lady Malvern. "An hour for her looking-glass, but five minutes to get to her place. She never cares how long she keeps other people waiting. Are they never coming?"

As a groom was standing by the horses' heads, Falconer dropped the reins, got down, and walked into the middle of the road. He put his hand up to his forehead to shield his eyes from a slanting ray of the departing sun. As he stood there he was a very striking figure, with his tall muscular frame, jet-black hair, and stern white face. Many eyes were fixed on him, and many criticisms made.

"He looks in no end of a wax," an underkeeper suggested to a friend in a shabby suit of velveteen. "I shouldn't like to feel the weight of his darned thumb."

"'E looks as ready to do a mischief as a fox popping 'is 'ead into a farmyard," rejoined the other.

"He's worse nor any fox," muttered the keeper savagely, who had an old score to settle with him.

"They are coming," Falconer raised his voice as he announced the fact to the Marchioness.

A thrill of excitement ran through the bystanders, and every head was craned forward, Townshend-Rivers sat as still as a rock. The waggoner gave a careful look at his team. Falconer stood well in

front. The tandems came in sight, moving along steadily, but at a rapid pace. Pemberton's cart was on the off side, and the chestnut was already ahead of the rival bay. Women fluttered their handkerchiefs, men shouted and waved their hats, Lady Malvern stood up and fixed her keen old eyes on Beatrice's face. She was smiling, and looking very bright, as the wind ruffled the feathers in her hat, and cries of "The chestnut! The chestnut wins!" rose from both sides of the road.

Just as they were close upon him, Falconer pulled out a large white silk pocket handkerchief. As he shook it out of its folds, preparatory to blowing his nose, the wind caught it from his hand, and flung it straight into the chestnut's face. The startled horse swerved right across the road and cannoned Mortimer's leader plump into the hedge. Unable to stop himself, the wheeler fell, throwing the Major and Millie out of the cart, and hurting both knees badly. Lady Crosby's flying form was caught in the arms of a sturdy farmer, whilst Mortimer reposed in the prickly embrace of a furze bush. Men rushed forward to help, women screamed aloud, the bay plunged wildly, whilst the gallant chestnut righted himself cleverly, and bolted down the road, the dog-cart swinging to right and left, but with Captain Pemberton and Lady Falconer still inside it. Lady Malvern hopped out of the phaeton with Townshend-Rivers' help.

"'They will have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth the young Lochinvar,'" he quoted airily.

She withered him with a glance, and going up to her nephew, she said with severity, "I hope you are satisfied."

"My wife is having her fling," with a shrug of his shoulders.

"You've killed her—for she's certain to be dashed to pieces. You've frightened Millie Crosby out of the small amount of sense she ever had—you've ruined the grey, and taken a hundred at least off his value. And now go, and don't come near me again for years—I can't stand you."

She stood before him, a little fragile old woman, but no more afraid of him than if he were a babe of a year old, with all the hatred and scorn which had grown up within her during these last years, breaking forth in the glance of her eye and the tone of her voice; and he looked down upon her from his height, and the big, powerful man felt absolutely cowed.

"Triumph of mind over matter," ejaculated Townshend-Rivers, watching the scene from the background, where he was busily engaged keeping his own horse, and several others out of mischief.

Lord Falconer stooped, picked up his handkerchief, and walked away.

Millie Crosby was sitting on a pile of rugs surrounded by a sympathetic crowd. She was in a nervous flurry, and the small hands which were trying to bend her crushed hat into something like its original form, shook violently. The farmer who had caught her in his muscular arms, looked down upon her yellow head with sheepish admiration, and flourished her sealskin muff with a proudly appropriative air, but the Major, after ascertaining that she had sustained no serious damage, was woefully inspecting the grey's off knee, an inspection at which the Marchioness assisted with great interest. The head groom hazarded the remark that the injury was not so very serious, and that with proper care the marks would wear off. Lady Malvern offered him her own embroidered scrap of a handkerchief, by way of a bandage, but he rejected it with scant civility, saying that "it was no mortal use to go a-tying of em up."

"Cares much more about that four-legged brute than she does about me," Millie said to herself with a pout; and then she raised her voice and explained that she had been "shaken," and now she wished to know how she was to be "taken."

The Marchioness, still with one eye following the grey who was being led home with the utmost care, offered her a seat in the phaeton, and Major Mortimer threw over his shoulder a reproachful "Won't you trust yourself to me? The bay's perfectly steady."

"Never again, thank you," she said with a shudder, and she looked as if she meant it.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE DUSK.

"THE child will be killed, I know she will," Lady Malvern kept repeating at frequent intervals as the afternoon wore on into evening.

Some of the men rode after the run-away tandem, but returned sooner or later bringing small items of news which did not carry

much assurance of safety to the Marchioness's mind. Townshend-Rivers suggested that it was far easier to run away than to come back, and that all run-away couples, if examined on oath, would certainly agree with him.

"It is not a question of a run-away couple," Lady Malvern said testily.

"Two people must make a couple, and as they are not here—they must be away, and as they went very fast it is equivalent to running," he rejoined imperturbably as he balanced himself on a stool which was much too small for him, and thereby jeopardised one of his hostess's precious Dresden tea-cups.

"Do put down that cup, and talk sense if you can," she said crossly, for there is nothing so aggravating as a series of small jokes when you are in a state of feverish anxiety.

"It's a large order," he said coolly, "but I will try to comply with it. Am I to understand that we are to have your charming niece all to ourselves without her Colossus of a husband? It doesn't seem like his form; I can fancy his going off, but with his wife packed tight under his arm."

"I never thought of that. Ring the bell, please." When Morris appeared she asked him if Lord Falconer had gone.

"No, my Lady," and then he lowered his voice, and told her that he believed his Lordship was waiting for her Ladyship; in fact he had heard that Miss Warren—her Ladyship's maid—had been told to pack up everything, and be ready to start directly she arrived.

"I must see to this at once," she said, looking quite tragic.

She sent Falconer a message to come to her directly, and then hobbled out of the room to receive him in private. Directly the door closed upon her ancient figure, there was a general loosening of tongues.

Mrs. Jocelyn opined that if she had been unfortunate enough to have an ill-tempered monster of a husband like Lord Falconer, she would have owed a debt of gratitude to the chestnut.

"Ah, but then—the coming back," Millie said with a shake of her head, as she imagined Sir Digby under the circumstances.

"Are you sure there will be a coming back?" asked Townshend-Rivers, whose cue it was to seem to believe in nobody but himself.

"As sure as that I stand here," Major Mortimer said decisively. "That girl has the making of a martyr."

"Fortunate—as her husband will always be ready to offer her the opportunity."

"You are entirely mistaken about her," Millie said, with an access of temper. "She's a dear delightful creature, but no more of a martyr than I am."

"I don't hear anything. It's really getting serious," looking at his watch.

"I can't sit here doing nothing," Lady Crosby exclaimed, jumping up, and upsetting a fox-terrier which she had been fondling.

"Go out and look for them if you like, but don't ask me to come with you," Mrs. Jocelyn said languidly, as she looked up from the game of Halma in which she had embarked with her General.

Millie turned from her in disgust. "What can I do?" she said appealingly to the Major, "I feel as if I must scream."

"That wouldn't do much good," he said with a smile, as he saw that her blue eyes were actually full of tears. "If you like, I will go out again."

"Oh do—do!" excitedly, "go out, and don't come back till you find them."

"Don't stir, Major Mortimer, unless you happen to be going to dress for dinner."

Looking round hastily, he saw the Marchioness standing behind him with victory depicted in every line of her face.

"But I am in an agony about Beatrice," Millie cried with clasped hands.

"Then you needn't be," with the utmost tranquillity. "She is perfectly well, though rather tired, so I've given her some tea, and told her to lie down."

"Then they've come back!" and all looked round with re-awakened interest.

"Of course they have," as if she herself had never had a moment's uneasiness about them. "They lost their way, which was no wonder, as neither of them knew it."

"And they didn't have a spill? Now I call that a regular shame," and the Major looked disgusted.

"I call it little short of a miracle, but it seems that young Pemberton is a capital whip; and the way he handled those horses in the midst of the smash, I shall never forget."

"No more shall I," said the Major somewhat drily.

"No more shall I," echoed Millie emphatically.

"And what does Falconer say?" Townshend-Rivers asked with twinkling eyes.

A quiver as if a smile were hovering in the distance passed over Lady Malvern's lips, but she answered with decision. "Nothing—absolutely nothing—the best thing any man could say under the circumstances."

"At least the best thing Falconer could say—we all agree to that. I should have improved the occasion," lifting up his chin.

General Mannerling looked up from Halma "And made a serious business of a mere trifle."

"Just like a man," quoth the Countess, whose experience of the male sex was wide and varied.

"Whilst woman, frivolous woman, makes a trifle of a serious business, lucky we are here to counterbalance her."

Millie was too much interested in the subject on hand to worry herself about abstract questions. Her anxiety was relieved, but curiosity remained, and she was dying to know every detail.

Lady Malvern moved about the room, collecting her various properties, "the Field,"—the last volume of a sporting novel—and her tortoise-shell-handled lorgnette. Her interview with Falconer had passed off triumphantly. He would on no account let his wife stay at Ethelred Hall without him; but he had agreed to stay till the next day, and then go to the Grange, on condition that she started at the same time to join her father at St. Christopher's. This was an arrangement which suited Beatrice exactly. She would be free of her husband for a fortnight at least, and time would possibly soften her feelings towards him. In the healthy atmosphere of her home her mind would recover its tone, and she would gain fresh courage to enable her to face the future. At all events it was a respite, and she was intensely grateful to Lady Malvern.

Whilst everyone was discussing Beatrice so glibly downstairs, she lay on the sofa in a cream-coloured tea-gown lazily sipping her tea, as she watched the burning logs in the grate.

After the first panic, when the chestnut dashed so wildly along the road dragging with it the unwilling roan—when any obstacle such as a cart or a carriage in the way would have made a collision inevitable, and death an unpleasant probability—she had enjoyed her drive most thoroughly.

When all danger was over, and Hugh had the chestnut well in hand, they turned out of the direct high-road where boys were often hooting or cheering them, and passers-by stopped still to watch them, as if they were driving for a prize at a horse-show—into a by-lane, intending to return to Ethelred Hall by another route.

The navigation of the lanes became a puzzling exercise, especially as the dusk fell promptly upon them, and shrouded them round in a soft grey mist, but as Beatrice remarked, "there was no hurry." To the poor heart-sick wife it was such rest to be out there in the deepening twilight with no part to play, no appearances to keep up. She could be her own natural self with Hugh under the over-shadowing branches of the trees in those high-banked lanes, and the relief was immense. He talked to her as no one else did, without one word of flirtation, but as he talked the bonds of their friendship seemed to be drawn ever closer and closer, and a great well of comfort sprang up in her chilled heart. Oh! if she could stay out there in the friendly darkness, and never go back to civilization and all its necessary concomitants again! Presently a sign-post started up aggressively at a corner with "To Wroxall," printed on it in such distinct letters that their young eyes could decipher it even in that dim light.

"Let us lose ourselves!" she cried on the impulse of the moment, as a great dread seized her at the thought of going back.

Hugh said nothing, but his face flushed, and his heart gave a leap as he deliberately turned the chestnut's head in the contrary direction. Wroxall was the nearest village to Ethelred Hall, and they were leaving it now on their right and going on indefinitely into the darkness, with the wooded hills gathering round, and the silence of the evening closing them in with its mystery.

It was a time that Hugh Pemberton never forgot. He had always been fond of Bee Kennard whom he knew far better than any other girl in the world. He had lived with his uncle in Eaton Square, only a few doors off from the Kennards, that is to say when he was not at Eton or Sandhurst. Having no sisters of his own, he made her into one instead, and even when he carried her photograph about in his pocket, he used to regard it with a sober fraternal affection. He heard of her approaching marriage with a vague sense of disapproval, but when the marriage was consummated he did not regard it as a personal grievance. He even told himself that if she

had married a decent sort of fellow he could have made a friend of him, and sympathised heartily in her happiness. But when he found that instead of being happy she was miserable, his feelings underwent a complete change. Indifference vanished—his heart felt in a tumult of unrest. Her silent endurance appealed to him more forcibly than any amount of sobs. She would not confide in him, and he liked her all the better for it; but to know that she was suffering and that he could do nothing to help her was simply maddening. Bee, his old play-fellow, ill-treated by a great hulking brute, and he must stand by and look on! Impossible on the face of it!

"My poor little Bee!" The words burst from him involuntarily, but she checked him at once.

"Don't—don't—you mustn't pity me"—she cried wildly, with a little gasp as if she were choking.

His heart beat furiously, as he bit his moustache, and crushed back the words of tenderness and compassion which were almost forcing themselves on to his tongue.

It was a dangerous moment, for they seemed to be alone in the world with no one to listen or disturb. The wind rustled amongst the autumn leaves—a sheep-bell tinkled in one of the dewy fields—a dog barked and rattled his chain in a farm-yard on the other side of the hedge. The horses were going as quietly as two tame lambs; he could even pull up, and make them stand still under the shadows in the silent lane, and then if he bent over her, and said "Tell me" surely all barriers of wifely reticence would break down, and she would pour out her troubles into his willing ear. The temptation was insidious, but he over-mastered it. He held himself in hand as he had held the chestnut, and when at last they drew up before the portico of Ethelred Hall, not one word had been spoken between them that her husband might not have overheard—and yet—

Her face was very white as the lamp-light fell upon it in the hall, and she hurried to the stairs as if her great object were to get away to the privacy of her own rooms without meeting anyone. But she stopped at the foot, and looked over her shoulder, struck by a sudden thought. Hugh went up to her. She looked into his face with an earnest gaze that he found bewildering. "You won't quarrel with him, promise me that," she said in a low voice.

"What if I can't help it?"

"But you *must*," with great emphasis. "Don't you see what would happen?" speaking fast in her eagerness. "I should lose you entirely."

"Would that matter much? You have scores of friends."

Beatrice felt as if she would like to shake him.

"Scores of acquaintances—half-a-dozen friends—and one pal," she summed up briefly. "Perhaps I've bored him, and he wants to go;" again she looked up at him and scanned his face critically.

"No, keep me on—when you bore me I'll give you notice," he said with an effort, and a meagre pretence at a smile.

A door opened—and she fled like a frightened rabbit, whilst he stood quite still, conscious that his pulses were bounding insanely: and as he stood there, he was captured by his hostess, and questioned like an unfortunate witness by a merciless Q.C.

"Never neglect details," she said afterwards when in a confidential mood, to Millie Crosby, who was satisfying her curiosity by inches. "I sent tea up to both their rooms, and announced it publicly, lest Falconer might imagine that they had been having a sentimental tête-a-tête in an inn-parlour."

"But didn't they?" in surprise. "I'm sure I should have had a cup of tea and a cosy talk."

"No, they are such superior people that they preferred muddy lanes and dripping branches. Everyone to his taste, as I said when I heard that the child was going to marry Falconer," and the old lady turned into her own room—thinking of the days when she always made the best use of her opportunities, and left consequences to take care of themselves.

(To be continued.)

"Prince Woronky's Love Story."

By V.

CHAPTER I.

HARD BESET.

On a certain night in Petersburg, not so very long ago, an Ice Carnival was held in one of the gardens of the great houses. It was the entertainment of the season, and all Russian society was there. An Ice-palace had been erected at one end of the lake for the supper-rooms, and the scene was the most brilliant imaginable, the whole space for skating was lighted with electric light, and the skaters were in gorgeous Russian costumes of every description, to which the black masks they wore added a bizarre effect against the white background of snow. The night was clear and bitterly cold, the whirring of the skates, the tinkling of the sleigh-bells filled the air, the sky was studded with innumerable stars which shone with unchanging solemnity and mystery on this little spot of earth, a focus of human passion, with its comedies, its tragedies, its anticipations, its regrets.

At first sight, the mass of ever-moving figures seemed a mere kaleidoscope of brilliant colour without individuality, but presently two figures detached themselves from the crowd, and skated swiftly towards the darker end of the lake. The man was over six feet, a splendid figure, in the uniform of a Cossack regiment, and the woman was also tall and slender, dressed remarkably, in white velvet and ermine, her hussar jacket heavily braided in gold and lined with scarlet, while the great spray of rubies and opals in her cap flashed strangely in the passing lights. They were soon followed by another figure, who skated slowly after them; he was a man of middle height, strongly built, broad and deep-chested; though plainly dressed, with nothing but his own bearing to denote rank or influence, his personality conveyed a curious impression of power. These three silent masked figures, the One overshadowing the Two with an unknown presence, speeding silently over the ice into the dark night beyond, were weird and almost tragical in their effect.

The couple stopped when they reached the edge of the lake, and

he who followed them immediately withdrew behind a small clump of firs, as if desirous of seeing without being seen.

"What is it you have to say to me, Casimir Alexandrovitch?" said the woman, in a rich low voice that was almost a caress.

She removed her mask as she spoke, and the starlight fell on an extraordinarily noble and beautiful face. Her companion followed her example and unmasked; he also was handsome, but to a close observer an evil life had marred the beauty of outline; the mark of the fallen angel was there.

"What is it I want to say to you Darya Nicolevna?" he returned passionately, "this is our last meeting for a year; ah! if you loved me as you profess, you could not have consented to so cruel a separation!"

For a moment the girl did not answer: hers was a nature to suffer silently, and she spoke gently, even coldly, "My guardian has promised his consent to our marriage if I am in the same mind then, and you know very well I shall not change."

"But you do not care," said the man bitterly, "I think you are cold as the ice itself, Darya Nicolevna."

"Cold!" repeated the girl, with a sudden fierce recklessness breaking through her reserve, ah! how little you understand me, when my heart is breaking—breaking." Her voice died away in a low sobbing breath as he caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

It was but a repetition of the same old story, for the man she was only one beautiful woman among many, to be persistently wooed and easily tired of; for her, he was her first lover, adored and idealised with all the fervour and imagination of the strong early developed Russian nature.

But Count Casimir Petroff was playing a desperate game to-night, there was something besides love in his eyes; ruin was staring him in the face, and this girl and her wealth stood between him and the final disgrace of a gambler who cannot pay his debts of honour. To his strained senses came the sound of the sleigh-bells across the snow, he could hear the voices of his servants calling to the horses, they were waiting for them both, surely it would not be hard to persuade a woman who loved! With consent, or without, she must go with him to-night, but all women were fools, and this was the most charming of them all. He bent closer to the beautiful head.

"Darya my own, my beloved," he whispered rapidly, "if you love me, why should we part? My sleigh is waiting for us both; once together nothing can part us."

"What is it you want me to do?" murmured the girl startled and trembling, drawing herself away from him.

"Only this," said Petroff in the same tone of passionate entreaty, with the fervour of a man pleading for his life, "Come with me to-night, I have arranged everything, why should you return to the old lonely life? Come with me Darya, my beloved one, and the most perfect happiness awaits us both." He caught her hands again in his as he spoke, and pressed them to his lips.

Darya understood now very well what he meant, and a fierce struggle was taking place within her; on the one side, was the exquisite happiness of union with the man she loved, marred by the dishonour of a stolen marriage, and a broken promise; on the other, separation from her lover and a return to a soul-stifling life with an aunt she detested. The powers of good and evil were warring together in her heart as she stood with her hands in her lover's, looking with unseeing eyes across the star-lit waste of snow; what wonder was it that her great love for this man, her longing for happiness, almost weighed down the balance? The wind soughed softly in the pines, and suddenly across the ice came the sound of music; the band was playing one of those wild Russian dances in which tears are veiled in laughter, and gaiety is so strangely linked with sorrow. It was her mother's favourite air, Darya was playing it to her when she died, and who shall say the spirit of the dead woman was not guarding her child in that supreme choice between good and evil, for to the girl's excited imagination it seemed as if her mother was calling to her through the familiar music, warning her against an unrealised danger, pointing out the path she should follow. Darya raised her eyes, full of tears, to the Count's face—he thought he had triumphed.

"Come!" he whispered exultantly, trying to draw her away, "come my beautiful one, the horses are impatient and we must go!" But Darya did not move.

"I cannot go with you, Casimir Alexandrovitch," she said in a tone of deep sadness; it seemed to me then as if my dead mother forbade it. You have indeed proved your love to me to-night, but I love you too well to bring shame on your name by a secret marriage. I promised my guardian not to see you for a year, if he would then

consent to our union. Ah, my beloved! the parting will only strengthen our love for one another."

For a moment Petroff's eyes fell before the innocent confiding gaze of the woman he so treacherously meant to betray, he knew that this was not the coy resolution of a girl whose scruples might be overcome by persuasion, and the blow was the more unexpected because his influence with women had usually proved irresistible, but ruin stared him anew in the face, and his rage and disappointment completely overcame him. His grasp on Darya's wrist tightened like a vice.

"We shall not part so easily, Mademoiselle Basistoff," he said in a low furious voice, "you profess to love me. What! do you think I am to be made a fool of by the whims of a girl? You should have thought of this before you trusted yourself with me, you are in my power: who will hear you?"

With a violent effort Darya wrenched herself free from him. "I think you are mad," she said, turning very white, "you forget yourself strangely, Casimir Alexandrovitch," and she turned, and skated swiftly away. But with a few strong strokes he was by her side. "Ah, you think to escape me!" he said, putting his arm round her waist and holding her firmly, "no woman has baffled me yet, and you shall not be the first, my pretty one; come with me quietly, or by heaven! I shall make you."

Darya stood still and faced him, but there was no room for fear in the tumult of emotions which filled her heart at that moment; it was as if an earthquake had overthrown every familiar landmark, and stranded her on an unfamiliar shore. Could this indeed be her lover, the man against whom she must protect herself? Then her eyes flashed dangerously. "Let me go," she said hoarsely.

"Let you go!" he repeated with a laugh, "ask me anything else, ah!"

His hold on her suddenly gave way, as a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a masked figure stood by Darya's side.

"So, my friend, you have been a little too hasty in the conclusion of your romance," he said, in a satirical voice, "surely, with his knowledge of women, Count Petroff should know they will not be hurried; naturally Mademoiselle Basistoff would take time to consider your proposition."

The Count swore sullenly under his breath, but he knew his adversary.

"Ah! do not swear in the presence of a lady," said the other composedly, "it is unfortunate certainly that Mademoiselle Basistoff's fortune is not available to pay your gambling debts, and I think in arranging that wedding in the chapel yonder, you forgot the existence of your wife in Poland. I received proofs of her identity this morning."

"It is not true, it is not true!" said Darya desperately, standing between them, and looking from one to the other, "Casimir Alexandrovitch, say it is not true!"

But there are some questions which require no answer, and as Darya realised the infamy of her lover, she uttered a low cry of horror, and staggering backwards would have fallen, had not the man who had saved her caught her in his arms, and laid her gently down in merciful unconsciousness on the ice. Then he rose to his feet, and removing his mask, faced Petroff with a terrible and just anger on his rugged powerful face. "Go, scoundrel," he said sternly, and the man's iron control over his own passion was more terrible than an outburst of rage, "and beware how you tamper again with what belongs to me." He advanced a step as he spoke, and suddenly made a sign with his hand; the effect was instantaneous; the Count's sullen handsome face grew white to the lips, his jaw dropped, the man was trembling with fear. The other snapped his fingers contemptuously.

"Now you know what I know," he said, "and men have gone to the mines for less. Go! lest I change my mind, Siberia is a safe place for such as you." Petroff needed no second bidding, he turned and went, his shoulders bent, his face ghastly with the fear which possessed him. The other man waited till he was out of sight, then whistled softly three times, and almost as the sound left his lips, a sleigh emerged from the pine-trees which bordered the lake, and advanced towards them. As it approached, a woman's voice said rapidly in French, "Is she safe, Monsieur le Prince, and what have you done with Monsieur le Diable?"

"He is finished with for the present," was the grim answer, "the old story was to have been repeated, a false priest, a mock marriage, *et enfin*—" he shrugged his shoulders expressively, "but she was true to her promise to me as I expected; I will bring her to you."

He lifted Darya's unconscious figure from the ice with an infinite tenderness, and laid her in the sleigh. The other woman watched him curiously.

"I wonder what you have done with him!" she repeated.

"Do you think I have killed him?" he said with a short laugh.

"He deserved it," she answered with a fierce concentrated hate in her voice, "the only fate for such men is to be wiped off the face of the earth. *Pauvre petite*, I will take her home, and you can make excuses to Mademoiselle Basistoff, Monsieur le Prince."

The sleigh moved away across the ice, and the man skated rapidly after it; he was soon once more in the midst of the gay crowd of pleasure seekers. It was after twelve o'clock, everyone was unmasked, and he was the observed of all observers, for Prince Boris Woronzky was one of the most powerful men in Petersburg, the intimate friend of the Czar, with whom he possessed considerable influence, and suspected in more than one quarter of being the real though not nominal head of the secret police. Hated by some, and feared by all, he was one of those inscrutable men who see everything and reveal nothing. In spite of the numerous people who detained him, he pursued his way with persistence characteristic of the man, and entered the supper-rooms at the opposite end of the lake; after a rapid glance round, he went on to the card-room beyond. At one of the tables sat an old woman, more like a bundle of gorgeous clothes than anything else; her yellow neck was covered with jewels, her shaking hands clutched the cards eagerly, and her thin cruel lips muttered discontentedly as she examined them.

"Ah! Boris Fedorvitch, is it you?" she said as he approached her. "I have had horribly bad luck to-night, I shall be ruined if it goes on. What is it you say? Speak louder, I am deaf."

"Darya Nicolevna has been taken ill, and has gone home with Madame Sherentieff," said Woronzky, putting his mouth to her ear.

"Ah! indeed," said the old woman with a leer of comprehension, "then she can't flirt any more with that handsome rascal, Petroff, eh, Boris Fedorvitch, but do oblige me by going away," she continued irritably, "I cannot play whilst you stand at my elbow."

With a shrug of disgust Woronzky left her, and passed out of the heated room into the cold night beyond. This wreck of an old maid represented Darya Basistoff's home life; it was small wonder, after all, that the girl had so readily "cast her pearls before swine;" to some women the very whiteness of their own souls, the very purity and nobility of their desires and aspirations, seem to prove an occasion of temptation.

CHAPTER II.

A PAGE FROM THE PAST.

"*Ma foi!* what can you expect?" said Madame Sherentieff, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders, "all men are bad more or less, and women must buy their own experience, that's all; harden your heart as I have, my poor child, and then you can make them suffer in their turn," and she laughed a light laugh it was not pleasant to hear.

She and Darya Basistoff were alone in the latter's bedroom; she was a small fair woman beautifully dressed; the men raved about her, and deserted women of far greater beauty for her sake. There was silence in the room after she had spoken, Darya sat on the floor in her red dressing-gown; her arms clasped her knees, her hair was rough on her shoulders, and her great eyes burned like fire in her white face; she had been thus for two days and two nights, neither sleeping, eating, or speaking. She had lost all sense of shame or pride, the hot irons of unmerited humiliation, of misplaced affection, were branding her soul, and she had given up all count of the lesser things of existence. Natalya Sherentieff's pretty face hardened into resolution; this was an extreme case, and needed extreme remedies.

"Darya Nicolevna! only a woman who has been ground in the same mill as yourself can help you," she said, and there was something in the harsh tone of her voice which startled Darya into attention.

"You think of me as a frivolous woman devoted to pleasure," she went on slowly, "but I only use the pleasure as a means to an end. It's true I am heartless; do you want to know who made me so? It was Casimir Petroff!"

There was another silence; it was as if two naked human souls were gazing at each other in passionate question and answer, until the words again dropped fiercely from Natalya Sherentieff's lips.

"It was long ago," she said, "I was a child like you then, I seem to have grown old—old since; he was the first man I met, and was quartered with his regiment near my father's country estates. I ran away with him, but we were married secretly the day before we started. I hadn't been with him a week before I found out that he was married already, and that the man who read the service over us, to silence my foolish scruples, was not even a priest; it's not the first

time, as you see, that a mock marriage has served his end, and I found out too," she continued, in the same slow fierce tones, "the wickedness of the world. I was in the power of a bad man, and I, who had been as ignorant of evil as a baby, from no sin of my own, but only because I loved, went through the tortures of hell in those few days. I escaped at last, and went back to my father; the whole affair was hushed up, and I married within the next year. I did not love my husband, but he knew everything, and I am grateful to him. Be thankful, poor foolish child! that Boris Woronzky has saved you from my fate."

She stopped abruptly, there was a shuddering sigh from Darya; she had fallen on her knees before the Icon above her head. With one pitying glance at the prostrate figure, Natalya Sherentieff went softly out of the room, and shut the door; she understood, from terrible experience, that, in such storm and stress no human help can avail, each soul must battle through the dark waters alone; the weak sink, but the strong reach the shore, albeit it is strewn with wreckage. And Darya wept those bitter tears which harden the heart instead of softening it; thus she mourned her dead love, with its hopes and illusions.

CHAPTER III.

FROZEN ICE.

THREE people sat at dinner in the Woronzky Palace; Prince and Princess Woronzky, and their guest, Count Casimir Petroff.

Only terrible necessity had brought the lives of these people into contact again. A veiled Death waited on the steps of the Imperial Palace, so awful in its reality, that it might well make the stoutest heart quail, and before the horror of it all private animosities, all individual passions were blotted out. The Prince had reason to believe that Petroff was a member of a certain committee of desperate men, whose campaign of Terror, if not checkmated by courage and devotion, would make Europe ring from end to end. With an unerring knowledge of human nature, Woronzky knew well enough that this type of man is as dangerous to friends as to foes; the Count was no patriot, he was rather one of those unprincipled Esaus of society, whose hand is against all that does not serve their own

interests. A heavy bribe was a sure method of modifying his revolutionary opinions! In this city of spies, the only way the two men could meet without exciting suspicion, was that Woronzky should receive the Count as a guest in his house, and in coming there that night Petroff was playing a double game. Ostensibly to his own party he was acting as a spy on the Prince; in reality, as he knew himself, he was as potter's clay in the hands of his quiet courteous host, who read the man's base nature through like a book, and with the power of the higher will over the lower, forced it into subservience to his own purposes. The Count was playing with edged tools, yet there was something after all to admire in the coolness of the man, who found himself, so to speak, between the fire and the deep sea; he was completely in Woronzky's power, who knew sufficient to send him to the mines for life, while, if he did obtain a free pardon and a heavy bribe by betraying the secrets of the Society to which he belonged, it was not improbable that Death would still dog his footsteps; judgment in such cases is usually unerring.

Darya Woronzky was but a development of Darya Basistoff, yet she had changed greatly in these few years of married life. A beautiful girl, she was a still more beautiful woman, and though her face had lost the roundness and freshness of early youth, it had gained in interest and charm; there was that in the wistfulness of the wonderful eyes, in the sadness of the strong tender mouth, which betrayed the knowledge of suffering, knowledge which is power to the man or woman possessing it.

This was the first time she had met Casimir Petroff since the Carnival night. Her manner was that of the finished woman of the world, and even the Count's insatiable vanity and cool effrontery were awed into respect, by that perfect mixture of the indifference of the great lady, with the gracious condescension exercised towards the guest of the house. None could have guessed from her composure, the agony of humiliation she was enduring at the sight of that evil handsome face, which seemed like the ghost of dead influences, of dead sensations; the strong self-controlled woman-nature wondered, with a mixture of pity and repulsion, at the infatuation and suffering of the girl, and yet, it was by these very steps she had risen to the height of her womanhood.

Darya was one of those women who scourge themselves only too willingly for past errors, and her dread of being absent at the meeting

between these two men was greater than her distaste at being present. The Prince had silently acquiesced in her desire to receive Petroff; he understood her motive perfectly, for there was a curious sympathy between the two. If she did not yet love him, Darya was singularly fitted to be the wife of such a man as Woronsky; she had a clear vigorous intellect, a silent tongue, and a high courage; he trusted her absolutely, and his dangerous undertakings made his life one of constant peril; none knew but himself how often he had stood between his Imperial Master and the relentless foes who pursued him inside the very walls of his Palace. The dominating influences of the man's life were devotion to the woman he had married, and loyalty to his sovereign, and where they were concerned he was inexorable.

He controlled his love for his wife with the patience of his strong silent nature. When he persuaded her to marry him, broken, despairing as she was in body and soul, he had said simply that he loved her, and would be content till she loved him.

Darya was passionately grateful to him, and as she sat at the head of his table that evening, in all the assured dignity and safe shelter of wifehood, confronted in the person of Casimir Petroff with possibilities which made her shudder, she knew suddenly, that it was not gratitude, but love which drew her towards her husband.

The conversation was carried on with the easy grace of people accustomed to wear the mask of society; the warm air was delicately scented with hothouse flowers, the servants moved softly about the room, everything was calm, luxurious, giving no hint of the dangerous game these people were playing, or of another peril close at hand.

The great blood-hound Wulf lay by Darya's side, and seemed the only disturbed element in the room; he was his mistress's constant and devoted companion, but to-night he seemed strangely restless, occasionally uttering low troubled growls.

"I know not what ails the dog," said Darya at last, when the dessert was on the table, and the servants had left the room, "I have never seen him so fierce, and see, he will eat nothing!"

"Ingrate! to refuse anything from so fair a hand," cried Petroff gaily, then raising his glass, "let me pledge you Princess, I, at least, will receive everything from your hands with gratitude!"

Darya could not resist a shudder of repulsion; nevertheless, with a strong effort of control, she held out her glass to touch his, but at the same instant there was a low horrible growl from the bloodhound;

with a bound he would have flown at the Count, had not Darya caught him by the collar, and held him back with all her strength, then suddenly, he turned upon her, worrying and tearing her arm with the blind fury of madness.

"Boris, Boris!" but the agonised terror-stricken cry was not needed; almost before it was uttered Woronzky had the dog by the throat, and freed her. Then began an awful struggle between the man and the mad brute; the Prince, though a short man, was possessed of immense strength, his muscle and sinew had been developed by a regular system of training, till they were like iron, they stood him in good stead now. Petroff leant against the wall, overcome with the horror of the thing and the narrowness of his own escape; it has been seen he was not lacking in courage, but the very name of hydrophobia scared him.

"Coward!" hissed Darya between her set teeth, "if you won't help him, go and get help." And Petroff turned and went, stumbling in his haste.

For a moment Darya watched that terrible struggle, all fear for self, all sensation of pain lost in the wild desire to save the man she now realised she loved with the whole strength of her soul. Suddenly she caught sight of the knives lying on the dinner-table.

The room was strewn with the *débris* of broken china and wrecked furniture, the Prince's strength was beginning to fail, his clothes were torn to ribbons, his breath came in great panting gasps, the man and the brute swayed backwards and forwards in a struggle which could only end one way; there was a red mist before Woronzky's eyes, a singing in his ears, those horrid fangs were close at his throat, the hot vile breath fanned his cheek, when there was the gleam of a knife with a wild white face above it, and in another moment the dog fell, stabbed to the heart, rolling over and over in its death agony, and Darya was clinging to him passionately.

"I have saved you, I have saved you," she repeated in sobbing exultation, "you know now that I love you—you saved me, but I also saved you!"

And Woronzky, as he saw on that beloved face the glory and light of a love equal to his own, knew that the full happiness of life had come to him at last.

He was the first to break the wonderful silence.

"Darya, my own, my beloved," he whispered, in his deep tender voice, "do you know that the dog was mad?"

Darya slowly lifted her head from his breast, and looked at him ; then she understood.

"You mean there is danger for us both?" she said quietly.

"There is only one way out of it," he answered, and his voice faltered somewhat, "I must burn your wounds and my own."

He did not wait for her reply, but putting her gently aside went over to the stove, and thrust the poker into the hot embers.

But Darya's nerve, already strained to the utmost, then utterly gave way ; in vain she implored him to spare her, even flying from him round the room. Woronzky was inexorable, he cauterised her wounds first, unmoved by her cries and entreaties, then his own.

When the servants, sent by Petroff, rushed into the room, they found the Princess fainting on the floor, and the Prince, grim, blood-stained, exhausted, kneeling beside her.

* * * *

Great natures, like iron, are often cold till heated by fire, but if then united they are indissoluble, and as in the old fairy tales, which contrast so refreshingly with the melancholy conclusions of most modern story-tellers, the Woronzkys lived happily ever after. They spent the summer in retirement on their estates in Livonia, and shortly after their departure a dangerous plot was discovered against the Government, in which several persons of high position were implicated. People had hardly recovered from the shock of this discovery, when Count Casimir Petroff's dead body was found one morning on the banks of the Neva, where it had drifted ashore. A certain mysterious mark cut with a knife on the left hand of the dead man, was a silent witness to those who knew, that Fate, linking hands with Justice, had proved merciless.

Nurse Hyde's Experiences.

By J. BARRETT-KNOX.

THERE was unusual excitement in the wards of Zoughton Infirmary as Christmas Day drew near, for a rumour had gained ground that a play was being got up for the amusement of the patients.

Nurse Hyde being an old hand at private theatricals, was appointed stage manager, but she soon found that "circumstances alter cases." It was one thing to organise a play at Hyde Abbey, when every guest and neighbour had leisure for costume making, part learning and rehearsals, and the chief difficulty lay in getting the subordinate parts undertaken properly. But with a staff of busy doctors and nurses, whose daily work had to be continued, and extra Christmas duties fulfilled, it was quite another matter, and Elizabeth's powers of organisation were taxed to the uttermost.

The play once chosen, the costumes were cut out and arranged during "off duty" hours; they were then finished by Jemima Dawson, a lame girl, who for many years had been an in-patient at the Infirmary. It had been necessary, finally, to amputate her right leg, and when she recovered, the post of sewing maid was given to her, and she was thus able to turn her talent for exquisite needlework to good account.

The probationers and nurses had not much time for extra sewing, as, when on night duty, the matron expected them to help make all the garments, which, on Christmas Eve, would be distributed to the patients.

Some of the women were well enough to help make up wreathing for the decoration of the wards. Nurse Hyde invented a novel flower basket for holding winter greens. She tied three bottle cases of straw together in a fan shape, and hung them upon the walls, with wide scarlet ribbon bows, connecting each group of baskets with long chains of holly wreathing. Even more effective designs were carried out by Nurse Brauns, a new German probationer, who had lately arrived at the Infirmary, and whose pangs of "Heimweh" were assuaged by the sight of the Christmas tree.

"I did not know that you, in England, did here, as we in Germany, the Christmas customs keep?"

"O yes," innocently replied Sister Margaret, "I believe there is very little difference in the way we keep Christmas."

She was mistaken. There was one custom not generally observed by the English, which Nurse Brauns put in practice on Christmas morning.

Sister Margaret was attending to a serious case, when she saw the fair-haired German girl enter the men's accident ward; her rosy face beaming with good will. What she said to the patient nearest the door the sister could not hear, but the hearty kiss which followed the greeting was patent to all. Passing to the second bed, Nurse Brauns repeated her cheery words and emphatic kiss. The third patient, a merry Irish boy, was ready, leaning upon his elbow, to receive and return the salutation, but by this time Sister Margaret had reached the bedside, and taking the offender by the arm, she led her into the passage, and sternly demanded an explanation.

"It is our custom! our Christmas greeting. You to me did say that here in England, you the same as we in Germany did do. Is it that I a mistake do make?"

Suppressing her inward amusement, Sister Margaret explained that the men were not accustomed to such greetings even on Christmas morning; and as the Matron had just sent for an extra probationer to help in the women's medical ward, she took Nurse Brauns across to Block A, where her talents could have free scope, without unduly exciting the patients' mirth.

Here, Nurse Hyde was very busy. Special beds had been prepared over night, for the usual cases of burning, which arrive at almost every hospital on Christmas Eve. Three of these beds were already occupied. Nurse Brauns' first work was to raise an old woman, who had slipped down from her pillows, being helpless with rheumatism.

"Thank you, Nurse; you see, I gets fainty like, and to-day I'm all of a tremble, for we were fairly scared last night by the goings on."

"What to you did happen?" enquired Nurse Brauns.

"Well, Nurse, we were just dozing off, when four policemen and an inspector brought in a case of *d.t.*, and as the small wards were all full she had to be put over there." Mrs. Barton pointed with a

trembling hand to the far end of the ward, where two high screens closely surrounded the bed. "She lay quiet enough for an hour or two, after she had swallowed a draught, and then she woke up and said 'the night nurse needed exercise.' She tore up and down the room, sweepin' all the porringers and trays off the tables! O the noise and the smashin'! We lay and shook, thinkin' she'd be on us every moment, but before Nurse could catch her she was back in bed laughin'! She's asleep now, poor soul. 'Tis her child yonder that's so badly burnt."

The probationer watched Nurse Elizabeth's gentle handling of a little girl, whose face and arms were swathed in lint, and whose sufferings were mercifully lulled by opiates.

"She's a good one," said Mrs. Barton appreciatively, "and some of the patients, they don't spare her a bit. They seems to think nurses are made of iron, and can be on their feet for fourteen hours without gettin' tired, and as I tells them, 'taint in nature, their faculties can't stand it, Nurse, they are but mortal. I have been six months in this infirmary, and why I didn't come in afore I can't think, so comfortable they makes you. Not that I haven't a good home of my own, but 'tis lonesome lyin' all day while my old man's at work. I look to go back to him in the spring. We've a nice four room cottage and a garden. Barton, he's a terrible man for greenstuff; why, he'd eat cresses three times a day, if I'd get 'em for him, or young nasturtion leaves, with bread and butter. There ain't nothing like 'em in his opinion."

"Who takes care of him while you are away? Have you a daughter at home?"

Mrs. Barton's face changed as she answered gently, "Yes, we have a daughter, but she's in Heaven. Don't you mention her to my old man, for he can't trust himself to speak of her to anyone but me. You see it was this way, my husband he worked for Farmer England, and in those days, when thrashing time came on, we women had to feed the machines. 'Twas nasty, dangerous work, a-standing on a board that got slippery with the straw, and the wind a-blowing your petticoats about. Barton, he made me always tie a big calico aporn tight over my skirts, but 'twas no use, one windy day the sharp teeth caught me, and afore I knew what had happened, I were lying on the ground all torn and mangled, and never no use again in my left leg. Barton, he were terrible upset, and when

Farmer England says as how Sally was old enough to take my place, he up and spoke his mind. "That no woman ought to work on them machines." But 'twarn't any good, if Sally wouldn't work, we might go, and he would find someone who wasn't afeard! So Sally went, and afore the thrashing was over, there comed a day when I was still in the hospital, and Barton, he saw a crowd round the machine, and it stopped working all of a sudden like—and when he went to see, a neighbour ran out and held him back. But my old man guessed, and he broke away and got past them all to where what was left of our Sally's broken body lay, and he never said a word, he didn't even seem to see the master, but he gathered her up in his arms and carried her home. But the parson and the neighbours were good to us, and when my old man heard that the Squire had given orders that never another woman was to work on them machines, and that he would never rest till he'd gotten a law passed to make his order good all over the land, why Barton, he fairly broke down, and said as how Sally's death had saved a many other lives, and he just went and got out her school sampler and hung it by his armchair so as to have a bit of her work beside him always, and he's never lonely, for all the children runs after him and calls him Grandfather." Mrs. Barton's voice faltered. "I think, Nurse, if you'd turn me over, I'd go to sleep awhile."

Nurse Elizabeth had overheard, and after placing a tall screen to keep the light from the brave old eyes, she administered a strong cup of beef tea, and was glad to see the old woman, soon afterwards, sleeping peacefully like a little child.

Another week passed, and then one day, as Elizabeth was passing the men's accident ward, Sister Margaret came hurriedly out, as if seeking for someone.

"Ah, Nurse, can you help me? That poor little Irish lad has been sinking fast, and I cannot understand what he keeps saying. He cannot last long. Do come and see if you can make out what he wishes. He seems to be asking for money."

Nurse Hyde bent over the bed and listened.

"Sure, and it's only twopence," she heard him say. "I'll not be able to face her without them."

"What can the boy mean?" wondered Sister Margaret.

"I think I know, for I have heard the same thing when I was staying in Ireland. The peasants believe that they must be buried in

white, with white socks on their feet, or the Virgin Mary will not admit them to Heaven. Is it white socks you want, Mickey?" she asked, taking one of the wandering hands into her own and gently pressing some pennies between the slender fingers.—"Here is the money to buy them."

The boy's face lighted up. "God bless you, lady," he whispered. "All white now." Then he started up in bed, and exclaimed, "Sure, there's the golden glory, and Mickey can go straight in."

The pennies fell from his grasp, and the nurses laid him gently down, thankful for the happy ending of his short suffering life.

* * * *

The Matron's special supper party for the nurses was given this week, and with a vivid recollection of the same entertainment which had taken place the year before, the nurses attended with very mixed feelings.

Some of the Christmas duties were a heavy tax upon their pockets. No one grudged the collection for the ward-maids, porters and post-man, but at Zoughton it was customary to present the matron with a handsome annual gift.

This was chosen by Miss Jeune, the assistant matron, who also collected the subscriptions. At some hospitals the matrons wisely refuse to receive any presents, remembering their own slender income in bygone probationer days; but at Zoughton no such scruples disturbed Mrs. Wyles's equanimity. She smiled sweetly at the nurses, and thanked them for their kindness, then pointing to the tea table, remarked genially, "The silver teapot you gave me last year looks very handsome, does it not? It is a pity there was not a cream jug and sugar basin with it, then the set would have been complete."

During a moment of appalled silence, a wave of surprise, confusion and amusement flashed over all the assembled faces, except the placid speaker's. Then Nurse O'Brien made a totally irrelevant remark, and in an unusual buzz of conversation the supper party was concluded.

The following year brought a new experience to Nurse Hyde. She was sent to a serious case of illness in a parish seven miles away from Zoughton.

"The squire and his wife are abroad," explained Mrs. Wyles, "but you will have your meals at 'The Warren,' and the house-

keeper will take care of you ; if you drive first to Dr. Geogehan's, he will give you instructions about the case and direct you to the Cottage."

It was a beautiful day in February when Elizabeth Hyde started, and when once clear of the town and suburbs, she felt as if driving into Fairyland, so wonderful was the winter scenery in its early morning dress of hoar-frost.

Gigantic elm trees stood up against the blue sky, with every twig and limb apparently carved in white coral, a light mist curled off the surface of the river where the dab-chicks and coots scuttered to and fro. Every reed and rush bore a plume of soft white feathers, and in the clear atmosphere one could see for miles over the brilliant, dazzling whiteness. It was quite a relief to turn into the Park gates and drive through the shade of the beech and boxwood avenues. Here the world was still white, but the trees arched across the road, with their arms outstretched and boughs interlaced, as if Nature was performing a veritable country dance. Out in this fairy frost world, Elizabeth could have spent many happy hours, but all too soon she reached her destination, and was kindly greeted by the old doctor.

"Glad to see you, Nurse. Let me get into your fly, and show you the way at once to Mrs. Drew's ; she is in sad need of your services."

A rough drive of a mile, through narrow lanes and across a common, brought them to an isolated thatched cottage.

Drew was one of the farm labourers, and earned twelve shillings a week ; out of this he used to say he fed and clothed himself, his wife and six children, but he omitted to mention that he had his cottage and garden rent free, that warm blankets and clothing were given by the Squire every winter, and that he had leave to trap as many rabbits as he liked for the family consumption. The wages of the two elder boys added five shillings weekly to their father's earnings, and the younger lads were able to attend to the pig, and help work in the garden.

But where comfort and order might have reigned, Nurse Elizabeth found only dirt and neglect. Mrs. Drew had been ill for many weeks, and had finally broken down with a severe attack of blood-poisoning. Her mother, Mrs. Smith, then arrived to take care of her. She was a tall, dark-eyed old woman, and spent most of her time smoking beside the fire, and occasionally hobbling upstairs to

lean over the footboard of the bed, and ask in piercing tones, "Is she *going* yet, Nurse?"

This question Mrs. Drew generally answered for herself, with an emphatic denial, and downstairs the old gipsy would hobble to prepare some meal for the children. The cottage possessed but three plates, two knives and forks, and one spoon. During Mrs. Drew's illness the children had broken the china, and lost all small or portable articles.

Poor little souls! They had a walk of nearly two miles to school, across ploughed fields, and never went either to church or Sunday-school.

Nurse Elizabeth first banished the old carpet from the bedroom, and then scrubbed and cleaned the boards and walls. She made friends with a respectable woman, who lived in the only neighbouring cottage, and there she cooked food for the patient. The fireplace at Mrs. Drew's was an old-fashioned one, in a receding wide-mouthed chimney; here Nurse tried one day to boil some fish, which the rector had brought for the sick woman, but Dr. Geogehan arriving before the whiting was quite cooked, Elizabeth drew the saucepan back upon the hob, and found it, after the doctor's departure, filled to the brim with earth, by the two little boys, who had watched her cooking preparations with the undisguised interest of a couple of intelligent monkeys.

For two months Nurse Hyde continued daily to minister to the wants, not only of the sick woman, but of the younger children also; the old mother was apparently hopelessly ignorant and obstinate.

"I don't hold with hospital nurses myself," she would say. "I've been in hospitals, and I *knows 'em*; give me the simple remedies we used to have, there's a power of good in them. Many's the cough I've cured with my mixture. Equal parts of vinegar, treacle and mustard; give half a tumblerful when the cough is bad, and in a few minutes you feel it drawin' to your finger ends, and all over ye. If the cough goes on, give *another* dose. I've *never* known a man need to come back for a third!"

"Do you believe in doctors, even if you don't approve of nurses?" asked Elizabeth.

Mrs. Smith nodded meditatively. "Yes, some's good; old Dr. Geogehan, now, he's the right sort. My husband, he used to be the

carpenter and undertaker in the village yonder, and *many's the job he's put in his way!*"

Apparently the dreadful old woman thought the doctor failed to understand her daughter's case, for nothing induced her to obey orders. After a serious relapse, Nurse Hyde had sat up many nights as well as days, and only left the patient at sunrise to return to "The Warren" for her daily bath and change of garments, getting back to the cottage just as the morning meal was in progress.

"I've given my darter her breakfast, Nurse."

"Not any of that, I hope," exclaimed Elizabeth, pointing to a heavy dripping cake which was black with currants.

"I did," was the defiant answer, "an' she relished it fine, and one o' my large green apples too. Don't see what you want to make a fuss about *that* for."

As it was too late to do anything but await the result of such unsuitable diet, Nurse Hyde said little, and curiously enough Mrs. Drew took a turn for the better, and finally recovered.

"All along *of me*," her old mother used to say. "If I'd 'a let the doctor have his way and starved her much longer wi' milk possets, where'd she 'a been now?"

Elizabeth made many friends during her daily walks to and from "The Warren," for she had to pass through the village to get to Dr. Geogehan's house with her daily report of the case.

"You don't look very well to-day, Mrs. Bone," she said to a little old woman who was peering over her cottage gate, and evidently longing for a word of sympathy.

"Indeed, miss, I don't feel well; just all of a shrim! For poor Mrs. Shipton, she *is* bad; I met her just now in the road, and you might have knocked me down with a feather, the sight give me such a turn. I couldn't go a-nigh her, I just turned and *ran*, and sat down all of a tremble till I could get to the kettle and make a cup o' tea."

"But where is Mrs. Shipton, and what is the matter?"

"She *said* she'd chopped her thumb off with the axe, and indeed it looked as if it was true, such a sight! She's in Mrs. Brown's cottage."

Propped up in an armchair in front of the fire, Nurse Elizabeth found Mrs. Shipton, fortunately in such a dead faint that the bleeding had ceased.

"She's lain a faint so long, Nurse, that the farrier said we'd best shake her up a bit, like they do to a horse in a fit, but it don't seem much good."

Nurse Elizabeth soon had the poor old woman upstairs on a clean bed, and tying up the wounded hand, with difficulty restored consciousness. It was indeed a nasty cut, and one that as soon as Dr. Geogehan had attended to, he decided would be safer in the Infirmary for a while, where Mrs. Shipton could be kept quietly in bed without using the injured hand, so she drove away the next day with Nurse Elizabeth, who was returning to the Infirmary.

(To be continued.)

Hot Words.

Pain and tears, tears and pain,
Hot words said, conn'd o'er again ;
 Night and day, day and night,
 Yearning eyes seem aye in sight ;
You loved me so, not long ago,
 Now, you love me never ;
Your piteous cry at parting nigh,
The bitterness of our "good-bye"
Will haunt me, hurt me, till I die,
 For ever, Love ! for ever !

Sing and laugh, laugh and sing,
Gladness glints o'er everything,
 Night and day, day and night,
 Hot words said, forgotten quite ;
Sweetheart ! I know you loved me so,
 No scorn, your love could sever ;
Past is pride, whate'er betide,
Leaving love, by trouble tried,
You and I, still side by side,
 For ever, Love ! for ever !

The Rubber Gatherers:

A STORY OF THE NIGER.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS,

Author of "RISING OF THE BRASSMEN," "ON THE ROAD TO BENIN," etc.

Two sun-scorched white men, clad in tattered karki garments, lay enjoying a brief noonday rest amid the tall plume-grass which fringed the bank of a winding creek, far in the heart of the savage wilderness of forest and swamp that surrounds the waters of the Niger.

The muddy stream rolled sluggishly before them, its yellow waters flashing in the sun glare until it was lost in the misty forest; and upon the further bank, beyond the feathery oil palms, whose curving fronds overhung the water, the silent cottonwood bush stretched away into the unknown distance.

It was fiercely hot, and the two Europeans lay half-buried in the grass, trying in vain to hide themselves from the burning rays; while a dozen naked krooboys basked upon the bare, hard trodden earth beside the bank, soaking in the heat like salamanders. "Long Dane" flintlock guns and sharply filed matchets were piled beside them, for there is generally trouble in the Niger delta. The ways of the fierce river tribes are hard to understand, and a white man who travels unarmed through the remote swamps does so at the peril of his life.

Presently, Frank Jardine, trader in rubber and palm-kernels, rose from his lair among the grass, and shaking the yellow dust of the plumes from him, observed angrily, "As the bushmen say, this country was made for the black man, and the European who tries to live in it deserves what he suffers. Once we clear the rubber off that knoll, I'll quit—even if I have to sell matches at home. It's a ghastly place."

His companion, David Thornton, who was if possible more ragged and dusty than Jardine, laughed softly as he answered, "Impulsive as usual. You needn't abuse the country, there's a hundred pounds' worth of rubber in the two canoes, and five hundred pounds' worth more ready for us on the knoll when we can get it out. Four days to reach

Sapelli, a week to collect more men and canoes, and get back—I hope Jim can hold out that long.”

Jardine's face grew thoughtful, and he answered, “I didn't like leaving him, but one of us could never have got through alone. He has a score of fighting men, and even if the river tribes find him out they can't get at him through the swamps. It's sickness I'm afraid of—strange, isn't it, that wherever rubber thrives Europeans die. We must start again in an hour and paddle all night; the sooner we get back the better.”

Then the silence of Africa settled down upon the camp, emphasized, not broken, by the oily gurgle of the river and the dry rustle of the palms. Later, something long and black drifted into sight round a bend of the creek, forming an indistinct blur upon the dazzling water, with a haze of heat quivering round it; and Jardine said carelessly, “An alligator or a rotten cottonwood log—the rains have started higher up, and the river's rising at last.”

Thornton shaded his eyes with his hands, and gazed at the approaching object long and carefully as it drifted towards them—he had a way of noticing small things. Then he said sharply, “No, it's a canoe with a man in it—he has clothes on too;” a sudden clamour rose from the krooboyes on the bank. The canoe floated steadily on, with what appeared to be a bundle of rags lying in the stern—a streak of grey cottonwood and a patch of raw blue, upon the shimmering river—until it swung round and round in a sluggish eddy, abreast of the camp; and all the time the limp figure lay very quiet and still in the stern.

“Launch the canoe and bring that thing ashore,” said Jardine, and a few moments later the light craft grounded among the tufted reeds, “Uniform of French Senegalis—been dead a day or two,” said the trader, turning the body gently over. Then he raised his voice, “Stand clear all of you—smallpox it is,” and the clustering krooboyes fled for their lives, while Jardine shuddered, for he had seen a bush village swept clean by the pestilence, more than once. Afterwards, with a choking in his throat, he drew a roll of moist paper from the breast of the ragged tunic; and puzzling over the sprawling writing read aloud, “Cap des Hauts Palmiers—a moi secours. Any white man help me or I die quick and alone. Launch Temeraire by tall palm—Senegalli all gone. Pour l'amour de——” The rest is illegible. What do you make of this?” he asked with a puzzled face.

"It's very simple," said Thornton gravely. "You remember the French gunboat that went up the river—the Flamboyant, wasn't it? Well, her launch has come to grief—surveying. The French have taken an unmitigated interest in the Niger lately. Usual story, negro crew deserted or dead, and one white man left aboard, sick with fever—or smallpox."

"We must get him out, can't let the poor wretch die, even if we are palm oil ruffians. Palmtree Point isn't very far, and one more risk doesn't count in Africa," broke in Jardine.

Thornton answered slowly, "No, but it means leaving Jim a week longer in that pestilential swamp, with the chance of being murdered by the gin smugglers. Five hundred pounds' worth of rubber is a good deal to us, too," and the traders looked at one another in silence for a space.

Then Jardine, the impulsive, raised his voice, "Launch them canoe, onetime, Kroo-boy."

His companion bent his head, after which he ground his heels into the mould, saying, "Confound that Frenchman."

Half an hour later the canoes vanished into a side creek; while the Senegali messenger, his last journey over, slept peacefully beneath the rustling palms, with his face towards the east, as befits a faithful Mussulman.

On the canoes went, across broad lagoons, and through a maze of tangled backwaters winding through the heart of the steamy forest; the white men swinging over the leaf-shaped blades among the Kroo-boys, in spite of the sweltering heat, as the full-throated paddling chorus, "Acha ho-hyah halla ho," and the songs of the Kroo nation rang out through the listless air.

On the evening of the second day, they paddled very faintly and wearily up a broad river-reach, when even the amphibious Kroo-boys, born to the use of the paddle, declared they could go no further.

"Keep it up—half an hour more, and one piece of cloth dash all round," said Jardine, mopping the perspiration from his forehead, while Thornton gazed anxiously forward over the bows. The sun had just dipped behind the shadowy forest, and the western heavens blazed with saffron and orange, against which the summits of the tall palms that overtopped the cottonwoods stood out black and sharp, a lace-like tracery of feathery fronds in a setting of red-gold. A lurid, crimson glow flashed along the oily water until it resembled a river of

blood, while heavy wreaths of fever mist crawled slowly forth from every reeking swamp, and spread themselves across its shining surface.

"Dark in half an hour; the frogs are beginning already—there's a leopard, too," said Thornton, as a long, eerie howl rang out through the stillness of the cottonwoods. "These must be the palms; where's the stranded launch?"

"Paddle, there, you Krooboy, or no gin have to-night," shouted Jardine, and the tired negroes swung wearily over the dripping blades, while the saffron glory paled and faded, and the mist went up in columns, like the steam of a great cauldron. "There she is at last," said Jardine, pointing to a shadowy object looming out through the drifting vapour. The Krooboys raised a shout, the paddles whirled amid a chorus of whistles and hisses; and a few minutes later the two canoes shot grinding alongside a big steam launch lying on an even keel, with her bows wedged hard and fast in a bank of bubbling ooze.

The white men swung themselves on board, and the negroes made fast the canoes; but there was no sound nor sign of life upon the deck, only rusty iron, tattered awnings, sun-blistered paint, and silence—a silence that could be felt, while darkness closed down upon river and forest, and the mist wrapped them round like a clammy shroud.

A ghastly place—boring crabs in charge too. "No, you don't, you brute," said Jardine, and he set his foot upon a loathsome, hairy-legged creature, which scuttled towards him holding a big mandible threateningly in the air.

"Get below and find a lamp or something, before the place gets upon our nerves and the Krooboys bolt; they're not far from it now," said Thornton; and the two men descended the tiny companion. "Thank goodness, here's a lamp," he observed, and when Jardine struck a match a smoky yellow glow illuminated the little cabin, falling upon the wasted form and sunken cheeks of a European, who lay upon a cushioned locker with legions of swamp flies crawling across him. The traders started at the sight, then, as the sick man, blinking in the sudden light, his dim eyes upon them, Jardine knelt beside him, and raising the sufferer's head, held a flask to his blackened lips.

"Ah," gasped the fever-stricken Frenchman, "Je vous en—you are very kind. *Grace à*——" and his eyelids closed.

"Hold up, don't faint," said the trader, "down with it again," and the sick man gasped for breath as a second dose of the spirit was poured down his throat. Then he raised himself on one elbow, and, afterwards, with the Englishman's strong arms about his shoulders, stammered out the pitiable story.

"I am Sous-Lieutenant Oger, the launch is of gunboat Flamboyant. She stick here much of time, and the Senegali they die—how you call it, small, small?—I send a boat and half men to Warri for help, and five stop. They die too; the last, he go in canoe with letter. Mais alors——"

"Excuse me, Lieutenant," interjected Jardine, and laying the Frenchman down, he broke in the head of a case of provisions which lay upon the floor. Then, turning to Thornton, he added, "Don't sit gaping there. What's this—soup? Make some quick, there's a galley forward; hunt around for wine, you're sure to find it. Hurry, for he's going off again," and kneeling down, he loosened the sufferer's tunic, and chafed the clammy hands, wondering if he was not running a greater risk than that of ambush and poison, but calmly prepared to face it all. The shadow of death broods heavily over the fever-haunted swamp-land, and one danger more is of little moment beside the lower waters of the Niger, where a white man's life hangs by a single thread.

By the time the steaming soup was brought the Frenchman came round, and, dosing it liberally with wine, Jardine fed him with a spoon, until the sufferer gasped, "*Cela suffit*. You are good, all Englishmen are not so: one black launch, she will not sell me drug when my men they die."

Jardine sprang to his feet. "May they be many times condemned—I know the crowd," he said. "If they had their way, there'd be no trader but themselves on all the river," and he abused his rivals fluently and forcibly, for five minutes, without repeating himself once.

"Ah, he is droll, *ce monsieur*—but I do not understand," said the Frenchman, with the ghost of a smile flickering in his eyes.

And Thornton answered, "Yes, he is unique in that kind of thing, even for Africa, and he has a genuine grievance too." Then he added, "When you've quite finished that exhibition, Frank, we'll talk."

Jardine stopped in his angry stride, and turning to the Lieutenant,

said gently, "Soyez tranquil, monsieur, we'll pull you through," and propping the sufferer's shoulders with a roll of palm matting, he bathed the hot forehead until the Frenchman's eyes closed.

"Frank," said Thornton, when they had satisfied their hunger, "has it ever struck you yet, that virtue is sometimes rewarded?"

"No," was the laughing answer, "it's generally the other way about, there's no room for virtue in Africa; but speak plainly, it's too hot for conundrums."

"Well," said Thornton, "you were always dense. Here we have a launch fit to steam ten knots, machine guns and coal. What's to hinder us going through the creeks and bringing off Jim and that rubber, in the teeth of all the heathen of the Niger?"

The listener smote his thigh. "We'll do it," he said. "The river's rising fast, and we'll have her off to-morrow—though you'll have to work as you never did in your life. A little rough on the French navy, isn't it?"

Then the sick man moved restlessly to and fro, muttering something in his own tongue, for the malaria delirium was upon him, and Jardine translated, "Says he served the flag with honor, and it's hard to leave his bones here among the rotting swamps. We must pull the poor wretch through some way. If we can come across the 'Nupe,' I'll fill that black captain's heart with the fear of death until he's glad to give us the whole of the medicine chest. I've done it before."

Thornton laughed softly, then he said drowsily, "You might not come off so well as you did last time—Sparkestone is at Akassar now—but I'm dead tired."

Afterwards the silence of Africa settled down. The Krooboys were fast asleep in the canoes; Thornton lay in deep slumber upon the opposite locker; but Jardine, the impulsive, in spite of the fatigue he had undergone and the work that lay before him on the morrow, kept watch by the Lieutenant's side, bathing the wax-like forehead from time to time, or moistening the blackened lips.

Before the sun rose across the palms, a trail of yellow smoke streamed aloft from the launch's funnel; then, amid much shouting and splashing, ropes were taken across to the opposite bank and made fast to the palms. When the first golden arrows of light streamed down from the rosy east the little winch hammered and panted away under an over-pressure of steam, the Krooboys whistled, hissed and hauled; while the propeller whirling hard astern threw up

a cataract of yellow foam. At last, shivering and trembling, with the mud sucking beneath her keel, the launch slid off into deep water, afloat once more.

Thornton came up out of the engine cockpit, for every trader among the tangled Niger creeks knows how to run a launch, a disreputable, ragged object, covered with coal dust, rust and grease; but the light of triumph was in his eyes, and he turned to his companion, who was dancing a can-can on the foredeck, while the grinning Krooboyes helped themselves to unlimited gin, and said, "When you've quite done fooling, you might get those ropes aboard and take the wheel. I'll look after the Frenchman, the poor fellow's raving mad—listen to him." Then the unabashed Jardine grasped the wheel, and towing the two canoes behind her, the launch churned her way up the yellow stream.

Three days passed, and then soon after sunrise they steamed up a narrow creek, where the great cottonwood boughs stretched far out over stagnant water and tanks of putrescent mud. The air was clammy with rising mist, and foul with the odours of rotting vegetation in the swamps ahead, and as the gurgling wash of the propeller lapped among the tangled roots, sickening exhalations rose from the bubbling ooze. A ragged shirt flapping from the topmost bough of a dead cottonwood caught Jardine's eye, and he broke out into a wild "hurrah." Then he shouted excitedly, for a fleet of canoes stole across the creek, half veiled in the drifting mist, with gun barrel and matchet glinting among the naked black skins of the negro crews, as they swung to and fro over the dripping blades.

There was a splashing of paddles, and several flintlock guns flashed amid the vapour, while Jardine shouted, "I know them by the blue tattoo and knitted hair. It's the gin smuggling tribe that threatened the Brass Consulate."

"So I perceive," said Thornton coolly. "Open the throttle wide. I never used a machine gun before, but I'm going to try it now." Next he ran forward, and kneeling behind the shield in the bows, swung the long brown barrel on its pivot, while Jardine, setting his teeth, held the steel prow of the launch straight for the centre of the knot of canoes. A moment later, the forepart of the launch was veiled in smoke, out of which rose a quick, grinding crash, and a rapid succession of steel-tipped projectiles hurtled through the cotton-woods, and whirled up fountains of slime as they buried themselves in the mud of the swamps.

A babel of howls and yells rose into the steamy air; there was a sputtering of villainous "trade powder" in flintlock guns, and a shower of broken cast-iron pot tore through the awnings; then Jardine spun round the wheel, and the launch's bows plunged right among the canoes. The light cottonwood crumpled up like cardboard before the bow; the water was strewn with paddles and swimming heads; and with a triumphant scream from her whistle, the little vessel hissed on up the creek, while the light flotilla of uninjured canoes fled madly down the river, the terrified tribesmen whirling their long paddles for dear life. When the last had vanished, and the regular "chunk, chunk" grew fainter and fainter out of the mist, Thornton came aft.

"None of our fellows touched, and I don't think I hit anyone either, though they got a fright. It's just as well, for the Protectorate might have made trouble, and I was getting mixed about the cartridge band." Then he started, as a ringing double report awakened all the echoes of the forest, and said, "We've come in time, there's Jim's Express."

Five minutes later the launch was moored alongside a knoll, rising like an island out of an awful desolation of oozy, rotting swamps; and a haggard white man walked wearily on board. After a silent hand grip all round, he said huskily, "I'm glad you've come. The bushmen have been hanging round for a week, some of the Nimbi tribe, and I've been on the watch night and day—thought they were going to rush us at last. The Krooboyes have got the 'craw-craw' too, and I'm afraid of it myself," and Jardine shuddered—he knew the terrible skin-disease which is caused by the handling of damp rubber. Then the new comer continued, "But what's this? Where did you get the navy launch?"

Jardine told the story, and Jim Crossthwaite chuckled as he listened. Afterwards he said, "You're a wonderful man, Thornton—it's too good a joke. If you made up your mind to get the King of Benin's ivory, you'd manage it somehow. But give me something to eat, and we'll get the rubber on board and clear before the river men come back and bring their friends. I've been here too long already."

Jardine went below to prepare food and explain matters to their patient, but the Frenchman lay raving and burning in the grip of the fever, and understood nothing of all that passed.

All that day white man and Krooboy worked with desperate

energy, in spite of the burning heat and the sickening exhalations of the swamps. Calabash after calabash of viscous green paste, and coil after coil of slimy, amorphous rubber, which had been wound about a man's arm dipped in brine, was stowed away below and piled high on deck ; and before sunset the launch steamed out of the creek, towing the smitten Krooboys astern.

When darkness closed down, the three white men lay about upon the cabin floor, cheerful in mind, and utterly worn out in body, though when at last the lieutenant opened his eyes, and feebly sat up, Jardine shook the drowsiness from him and fed his patient with food ready prepared.

"I am better—yes, the madness is gone. *Grace a votre bonté*, but what is this—this, *cet odeur d'enfer*?" he said, and the listeners laughed, as Jardine translated literally, for, if there is anything in the world which possesses an effluvia worse than the nauseating, fetid smell of raw African rubber, it must be very hard to find. Thornton proceeded somewhat shamefacedly to explain, and once a red flash burned in the sick man's hollow cheeks ; but when the narrative was finished, his dim eyes sparkled, and holding out a trembling, claw-like hand, he said, "You have save my life—and the launch too. The rubber, what does it matter—but the kindness, yes. You are wonderful peoples, you English, but it's always the trade. We others consider *la gloire*."

"Yes, yes, that's all right, but you lie down again and sleep," said Thornton soothingly. "We're off for the coast now, and you're getting better every hour." Then he turned down the swinging lamp and crawled forward to the machinery cockpit. Soon there was silence below, and with a grizzled old Krooman at the wheel, the launch hissed along between parallel walls of solemn forest, the broad moon-lit river breaking away into wreaths of silvery foam before the thrust of her keen bows, the gurgling wash lapping noisily among the reeds ashore, and the panting of her high-pressure engines, disturbing the stillness which hung heavily over the shadowy bush.

When morning came, she was far down the river on her way to the settlements ; the sick Frenchman was carried on deck and made comfortable beneath the awnings, and the three traders lay about beside him, telling stories both ghastly and grotesque about the savage land of swamp and creek. Dense cottonwood forest choked with gorgeous hued creepers ; clusters of feathery palms, beneath whose feet grew

crimson spike-flowers and the tall white African lilies; and awful desolations of rotting swamps, opened up and faded away astern as the little vessel churned her way across many a broad lagoon, down broad river-reaches, or twisted in and out of the mazy creeks: for in the Niger delta there are waterways everywhere.

In places the air was heavy and foul with the exhalations of rotting vegetation and festering mud. In others, the aromatic odour of burning wood betokened the vicinity of a native town; while now and then the listless breeze was filled with the fragrance of lilies and an odour as of frankincense, myrrh and all manner of spices, until on the third day the dingy, leather-leaved mangroves announced their approach to the coast.

Great was the astonishment of the white officials of the Niger Coast Protectorate Consulate at Nepas Konokri as the launch steamed up the creek and made fast to their wharf. The Vice Consul smiled grimly when the three adventurers told their story, and he said, "Yes, I believe that swamp is in our dominions, if your bearings are correct, and I can give you papers to work it. You did well to come to me at once, for if the other powers had heard of it they would probably have claimed it as their territory—you understand." Jardine did, he knew by bitter experience what the monopolists could do, and the officer continued, "However, I don't think I'd use that launch again. It isn't quite the thing, and might lead to trouble."

With the courtesy and kindness for which the Protectorate officials are justly famed, the sick Lieutenant was received and cared for at the Consulate, and was about again when the gunboat *Flamboyant* descended the Kwarra and sent a crew from Forcados to bring back officer and launch. By this time the three traders were back again with a strong party in the wild bush, and when they returned, months later, a letter and a packet awaited them at the Nepas Konokri Consulate. Whether the grateful Lieutenant ever told all the story is doubtful, for the packet contained two gold watches with inscriptions upon them; and Jardine said as he read the graven thanks, "We must go and look Oger up some of these days; two more lucky trips and we can clear out of Africa altogether. No rubber worth anything on the Niger, say the Gold Coast people; perhaps there's not, if you sit down and wait for the niggers to bring you rubbish, but if a man will run the risk and go up and look for it, there's better rubber in these swamps than ever came out of Lagos or Accra."

"Sanguine as ever," said Thornton smiling, and the Government officer added :

"If they gave you watches for that affair, I wonder what you would have got if you had borrowed the gunboat too and filled her up with palm oil."

The European population in the Niger delta changes every three years or so, through fever and other causes; but a good story lives on, and when men sit panting on the broad verandahs through the sweltering evenings, too listless even to play cards or smoke, there is one narrative which will long be told. That is, how three presumptuous traders, Palm-oil ruffians, as they are called on the coast, annexed a portion of the French navy to bring down their evil-smelling rubber through the tangled creeks.

Records of History.

By BEATRICE E. CLENNELL.

NOT in books only is written the history of this old earth of ours. Like her human children, her story is written upon her face, but it is not given to all to read.

Dimly the geologist may discern the meaning of the main contours, and can tell us what passion of long ago caused a wrinkle here or a furrow there. There are, however, traces of more recent emotions, not so huge perhaps but appealing to us more intimately. Many of these scratches, blotches, and patches, are fresh wounds, and (sad to relate!) have been inflicted by Earth's own and youngest child, man. Yet, it is injustice to speak of all at any rate as wounds. The far-off inhabitant of Mars may recognise but scars and scratches but now and again we have adorned our great Mother with fair cities, with temple and palace, with monuments of kingly power, wealth, and heroism. In the old days monumental record was almost the only one.

Of all races the Egyptians have striven hardest to leave perfect records behind them. There is something profoundly

pathetic in this struggle to live for ever in the world's history, and they have many a tale worth hearing to relate. Who has ever looked at Egyptian sculpture without marvelling at its remarkable preservation? We read the date beneath, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 B.C., it seems to make no difference, the polish of the black diorite remains unscratched, hardly dimmed by time. In part it is explained by the wonderful climate of Egypt, with air clear as we in England never see it, but it is also due to this great passion for imperishable record, making possible the wonderful patience that could stop to fashion stone so hard that modern chisels break upon it. This was one method of making a record well-nigh impossible to efface.

Another plan employed by those who evidently knew and feared the hand of the Vandal, to whom nothing is sacred, was to carve inscriptions high up on the rocky sides of precipices, removing all possibility of access. This was of course only possible in mountainous regions. It was an obvious way of recording conquest, to set a mark upon the country's face that could not be obliterated. As boys carving their names upon the cliff to show how high they have climbed, so ancient conquerors have left us their names, or may-be their portraits.

Somewhat west of Lake Van, in what is now Armenia, may be seen a sculpture in the natural rock, representing a king in a walking attitude and pointing the way. The inscription tells us that this is Tukulti-Palesharra (Tiglath Pileser I.) King of Assyria. Again and again the Assyrians came down upon this ill-fated country, carrying with them the terror and desolation for which they will be for ever remembered. This happened 1,100 B.C. It may have been the first, but unhappily it was not the last, occasion upon which the Armenians have suffered cruel persecution.

In Asia Minor are numerous remains of an older civilisation than that of the Assyrians, that of the Hittites. Among these are rock sculptures and inscriptions in those strange characters that still remain one of the most puzzling of the unsolved riddles of the world. At present our knowledge of the Hittite race is vague in the extreme, but should the clue to the language be discovered we may expect the unfolding of one of the wonderful lost pages of history. Of the sculptures, one of peculiar interest, like the Assyrian example, represents an advancing warrior. It is upon the face of a rock in a

pass on the road between the ancient cities of Ephesus and Sardis, and twenty-five miles from the modern Smyrna. Herodotus relates having seen it, and that the Ionians said it represented Rameses II., the great Egyptian conqueror, but he seems to have felt some doubt. The pointed cap and felt boots alone prove to the most superficial student of ancient life that whoever he is, he is not an Egyptian. Indeed, as a Hittite, he represents the great rival of Egyptian power.

Most important of all rock carvings, because of the inscriptions that have thrown so much light upon both the history and the languages of ancient Asia, are those upon the famous Rock of Behistun. The rock is isolated and of peculiar form. On the straightest and smoothest face is the inscription, 300 feet from the base, and consequently inaccessible. How the work was originally executed is a mystery, for it was only with infinite trouble and the aid of field glasses that a copy could be made. The inscription is in three languages, and is to the glory of Darius the great Persian King. The sculpture appears to represent him receiving the homage of various nations.

Of Persian sovereigns there is one notable portrait, not a rock-carving however, but a bas-relief at Pasargadae. This is of Cyrus, famed for his noble and generous character, who was the first unmistakeably good ruler in history, endeavouring to rule his people for their own welfare, not for the amassing of wealth to himself. The face is an obvious portrait, resolute, intellectual, but not beautiful, though strikingly modern in type. The trilingual inscription above is highly characteristic of the man in its simple dignity: "I am Kurush, the King, the Akhaemenian."

By extreme durability, and secondly by the difficulty of approaching the monument, its preservation was assured. A third method of recording history still remains. In countries where stone is not abundant, another material has been pressed into service, and this is clay. The making of bricks and tiles was a great art brought to high perfection in the ancient land of Chaldea, but it is a somewhat startling idea to us that "books" also should be made of clay. Thus were the wonderful annals of the great Assyrian nation handed down to posterity. A wedge-shaped tool was pressed upon the clay while moist, hence arising those curious characters known as cuneiform. The tablet when baked was

singularly durable ; neither fire nor water could harm it, and though Nineveh was burnt to the ground, the libraries of books have remained safely hidden beneath the débris, and little harmed by falling.

To pass on to the consideration of a few of the material records of interesting events in history, especially those that appeal to us in pictorial form.

Inscriptions of words only, and those with slight illustrations added, merge together, growing either more and more artistic or more and more literary. The first picture histories are of very symbolic character. For instance, in the very earliest of all inscriptions recording an historical event, we have one man to represent a whole nation, while the conquering king is made somewhat larger to indicate his superiority. This, an Egyptian inscription, the Sneferu tablet, dates about 4,000 B.C. The king, Sneferu, was the first monarch of the Fourth Dynasty, known as the pyramid builders. He is represented on the tablet as subduing either an Arabian or other Asiatic enemy. In like manner, in later Egyptian inscriptions, we may see Rameses III., the representative of the whole Egyptian Army, drawing his bow against a host of tiny men. The record of the victory of Shishak over the Jews is also told with characteristic terseness, by the figure of one man of Jewish countenance with his arms bound behind him.

The custom of setting up obelisks to commemorate victories was established by the Egyptians, and was imitated by the Assyrians. Unlike the Egyptians, whose passion for symbolism limited and restricted their artistic power, the Assyrians used pictorial record freely. The palace walls are covered with low relief sculpture, illustrating with careful detail great battles or famous hunts. A favourite subject among Assyrian recorders, as with all other ancient races, is that of foreigners bringing tribute ; this subject was beyond all others pleasing to the proudest and most boastful of nations. Very interesting among "tribute-bearing" pictures is a certain obelisk of King Shalmeneser II. This monument is now in the British Museum. It is in the same hard black stone, or diorite, as the Egyptians so often used, but in size it is not at all according to Egyptian fancy for it is comparatively small. The four faces of the obelisk are ornamented with slightly sunk panels containing sculptured figures. Here we see men heavily laden with offerings

of gold and silver and all manner of precious vessels, or leading a fine horse or more curious animals, such as camels, elephants, and monkeys; while to throw even greater glamour upon the events of the king's reign, the artist does not hesitate to introduce an occasional fabulous monster. Yet historic value is not absent, for the obelisk claims our attention principally because it records the fact that tribute was received from Jehu, King of Israel. Beneath this statement (in the second panel from the top) is represented a man, probably Jehu himself, with his head bowed to the ground before the proud figure of the Assyrian monarch. This dates B.C. 842.

Passing onward to the next great race of conquerors, the Romans, we find that they also used their pictorial powers chiefly to glorify their great deeds. It is not tribute though that we see borne upon the shoulders of these stalwart Roman soldiers, but spoil.

Among the most famous of Roman monuments of conquest our thoughts turn instantly to the great column set up by Trajan, and to the various triumphal arches. The column is a new and highly characteristic Roman idea; and the arches were a natural development of a great national institution—the triumphal entry into Rome of the conqueror. It is easy to imagine how the streets were festooned with wreaths and temporary arches, that grew more elaborate with increasing wealth, until the light wooden framework must be replaced with something more costly and more lasting.

Roman architecture and art are seen nowhere to better advantage than in the really beautiful arch of Titus, and the spirited sculpture is full of peculiar interest, for here is the account, second only in importance to the written one of Josephus, of the Sack of Jerusalem. Very little is known of Jewish art, and not a fragment remains. This is not so astonishing when we remember the costly materials used by the wealthiest of splendour-loving Orientals. These sculptures contain our only authority upon Jewish art; here we may see the form and detail of the seven-branched candlestick, and the representation of other spoils from the Temple, the tablets used in the service, the golden table for the show-bread and the chalice.

Of all pictorial accounts of conquests the one that must claim most interest from us, not only because it records an important event in our own history, but because it is as graphic a record as possible, is the Norman conquest of England as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry. This is a new material, not the work of a people who

thought far beyond the present, or set any great value upon permanent monuments, but of a people absorbed in warlike exploits and endeavours to bring order into a disorganised state of society. The new guardians of history are therefore the monks, writing chronicles and illuminating manuscripts in the quiet of the monastery, and the ladies spending long hours in strong castles over their embroideries, while their lords are fighting in far distant lands. The Bayeux Tapestry is by repute the work of Queen Matilda, the wife of the Conqueror. It has been suggested that the actual carrying out of the design was placed in the hands of the Saxon ladies, who were celebrated for their needlework. This would seem to be a piece of most uncalled-for cruelty on the part of the conquerors, but it will be observed that the tale is told in a manner that could not possibly be galling, the Saxons fighting bravely for their country, and though William is, of course, the hero, Harold by no means figures as the villain. The story is told in seventy-two compartments, or we might say chapters, and though it is childish—even barbarous in draughtsmanship—nothing could tell with more clearness and simplicity how and why the Normans came to England.

Needlework imposes very severe limitations, so that a certain stiffness of outline is inevitable. The artist's modesty suggests short verbal explanation, thus :—"Hic exeunt caballi de navibus," "Hic residet Harold, rex Anglorum," and so on.

In the first compartment we see Harold taking leave of Edward the Confessor, and then follows his journey and landing in Normandy. The artist is evidently well acquainted with the life of the Norman court, and gives us many a vivid little sketch. The ill-fated holiday ends by Harold being detained against his will, a point that this chronicle makes tolerably clear. Then follows Harold's oath to William over the sacred relics. The following scenes show the return to England, and the death and burial of the Confessor at Westminster Abbey. This last is of peculiar interest, as being the earliest representation of the newly-built church of St. Peter at Westminster. A hand points to it from heaven, as though wishing to inform us that this is the work of the dead monarch. The crown is offered to Harold, and the coronation follows, in spite of the superstitious fear with which the appearance of a comet is viewed. The scene is now changed to Normandy, where great preparations

are taking place. The pictures showing the manner of life in the advancing Norman army are full of interest, the form of the vessels with their quaint sails, the soldiers feasting off their long-shaped shields, which form such handy tables, their armour, and their horses. It may be remarked that the designer's wish to distribute the colour has led him, or rather her, to show us horses of unusual hues, such as blue and green. The story concludes, somewhat abruptly, with a few battle scenes, and last of all, the death of Harold.

Quaint as the Bayeux Tapestry is as a work of art, there is no denying it a high place, as a contemporary and authentic record made by one evidently well acquainted with the facts; it also has the credit of being a singularly true and fair account.

The recording of history of later times falls more and more into the hands of writers of books. Yet even our own land can boast no inconsiderable number of more substantial monuments, though it can hardly compare with the time defying and colossal works of a Pharaoh, or the exalted splendour of a classic Greece or Rome. A grand tomb to a king, a number of crosses to the memory of a much loved queen, the effigies of knights who fought in the crusades, indeed do their best to tell our English history in stone. We have to thank our much abused climate, and our too energetic Puritan forefathers that this history is but a meagre one.

There is, though, an interest surpassing far that of places, and that is the supreme interest we all feel in people, in special individuals. We flock in millions to catch sight of the hero of the moment. If the actual sight is denied us, we buy a photograph or a print. What a history book could be made out of portraits alone! Does it tell us nothing to look at the vigorous face of Seti I., a little fierce but not unpleasant, with its faint and peculiarly Egyptian smile? He was a great warrior, a busy builder, and by repute the first oppressor of the Israelites in Egypt. Or is it the great Assyrian monarch, Sargon, perhaps the greatest conqueror of the ancient world, though by a strange chance his name has been lost to written histories for so many centuries? The kingly pride, the cruel indifference of the face with its strong Jewish features, are things not easy to forget. Personally like his father, but less dignified, and of coarse, more sensual aspect, is Sennacherib, far better known to popular fame.

Greek portraits are rare, those that we have are principally handed

down through Roman copies. Such are the well-known busts of Socrates, Plato, and the Athenian ruler, Pericles. These are, however, so individual as to be undoubtedly founded on fact. Of Alexander the Great there are a few, probably contemporary, portraits, and many echoes. According to tradition he only permitted one painter, Appelles, to represent him, while Lysippus, a sculptor, was permitted to make a portrait bust. However this may be, his features, and they are remarkably handsome, pervade all the sculpture of the period. We have, in the British Museum, a fine example of the type in a bust found at Alexandria; a youthful, almost boyish face, with long, thick waving hair, eager eyes, and proud defiance in the mouth, the last feature perhaps a little lacking in refinement. It is in all essentials the same head as that in the famous Pompeian mosaic, thought to represent the battle of Issus.

There is no need, perhaps, after all, to urge in England the greatness of this sort of history. For have we not our new Portrait Gallery, with its rich company of poets, painters, musicians, actors, novelists, statesmen, travellers, preachers and scientists? Indeed, it is a priceless heirloom that we are leaving for future generations.

"Festus" and its Author.

By P. B.

Of the great poets whose genius has enriched the Victorian era, none—Keats alone excepted—have acquired the right to wear the laurel wreath of Fame at such an early age as Philip James Bailey, whose poem "Festus," published when only twenty-three years of age, was hailed with unqualified praise by all the chief critics, and the literary world, both here and in America. When the identity of the author of this anonymous work became known, he was extolled as the brother of Goethe and Milton. The enthusiasm which the poem aroused in America was phenomenal; it quickly ran through numerous editions, until, up to twenty years ago no fewer than thirty were named in the Publishers' Catalogue, U.S.A., while as late

as 1884 a compilation of extracts entitled "The Beauties of Festus," has been issued by Messrs. Longman Green and Co. One of the great dramatic critics of that time, in speaking of this magnificent poem, declares "I know no poem in any language that can be compared with it in copiousness and variety of imagery. The universe is as rife with symbols to this poet as it is with facts to the common observer."

Yet despite the reputation Philip James Bailey so early acquired by the publication of his great poem "Festus," this masterpiece is less known to the modern reading public than the works of many of his contemporaries—a fact mainly due to the poet's retiring disposition, and also no doubt in a measure to the subject of the poem, dealing as it does with the fight of Faith in a world of matter. Born in 1816 at Nottingham, at a very early age he displayed a remarkable taste, partly inherited from his father, Mr. Thomas Bailey, who had a wide local reputation by the publication of "The Annals of Nottinghamshire," a most comprehensive work, dealing in general local information, both social and political. To Mr. Bailey, who was also the proprietor and editor of "The Nottingham Mercury," the early literary proclivities of his son were doubtless a source of gratification, and he assiduously cultivated the young scholar's pronounced talent. His studies were carried on in Nottingham under the best masters, and in 1831 Philip James Bailey matriculated at Glasgow; but quitted college without seeking to obtain a degree. He evinced no desire to take part in theological preparations for the Scotch Presbytery. After quitting Glasgow the young student turned his attention to the study of the law, at the same time that he engaged in many private and personally selected studies. Three years later, in 1835, he was elected a member of the Hon. Society of "Lincoln's Inn." In the following year, after spending some time in visits to France and Scotland, he returned to Old Basford, whither his father had now retired, and devoted himself with unflagging zeal to the composition of his chef-d'œuvre, the grand vindication of human life and immortality in the person of "Festus." Animated by the spirit of a more liberal religious theory in regard to a doctrine like ultimate and universal salvation, whether in regard to men or angels, as treated of by Klopstock and others, and inspired by like themes of eternal interest to mankind, the poet traces in "Festus" the history of a soul richly endowed with spiritual possibilities, but

exposed to sore trials and temptations, from which he emerges victorious into the faith of a larger creed, and is able to exclaim :

"I am an omnist, and believe in all
Religions—fragments of one golden world
Yet to be re-lit in its place in heaven—
For all are relatively true and false,
As evidence and earnest of the heart
To those who practice or have faith in them,
The absolutely true religion is
In heaven only, yea in Deity."

Nor does the existence of evil, and the eternal problem of suffering, shake his faith in the all-merciful power of the Creator, for he has the assurance that

"God surely lives !
Without God all things are in tunnel darkness.
Let there be God, and all are sun—all God]
And to the just soul in a future state,
Defect's dark mist, thick-spreading o'er this vale,
Shall dim the eye no more, nor bound survey ;
And evil now, which boweth being down
As dew the grass, shall only fit all life
For fresher growth, and for intenser day,
Where God shall dry all tears, as the sun dew."

The whole aim of "Festus," as indeed of the author's own life, has been, as he himself expresses it, "to have done his best to favour a simple creed, which comprises in its consecrated elements a belief in the benignant providence of God, in the immortality of the soul, in the harmonized gospel of faith and reason combined, and in the just, discriminative judgment of the spirit after death by Deity."

The simplicity of his creed of life, not influenced by dread of punishment hereafter, or fear of the consequences, but by the inherent attraction of goodness for its own sake, is summed up in "Festus"—

"It would be well I think to live as though
No more were to be looked for ; to be good
Because it is best here ; and leave hope and fear
For lives below ourselves. If earth persuades not
That I owe prayer and praise and love, to God ;
While all I have, He gives,—will heaven ? will Hell ?
"No ; neither, never !"

He will not admit that Nature—the laws of God regulating human life, are ever at fault, but rather insists that the distorted lives men lead are alone blameworthy :

" Nature does
 Never wrong : it is society which sins.
 Look at the bee upon the wing among flowers ;
 How brave, how bright his life. Then mark him hived,
 Cramped, cringing, in his self-built, social cell.
 Thus is it in the world-hive ; most where men
 Lie deep in cities as in drifts, death drifts ;
 Nosing each other like a flock of sheep ;
 Not knowing, and not caring whence nor whither
 They come or go, so that they fool together."

A year after the publication of "*Festus*," in 1840, he was called to the bar, but never practiced. Although the fame of "*Festus*" eclipsed all his later works, Philip James Bailey is also the author of a satire on the miscellaneous characteristics of the current period, named "*The Age*," not published till 1858. Three years later, in 1861, his remarkable treatise on "*The International Policy of the Great Powers*" was published by Messrs. Saunders, Otley and Co., in which the author skilfully elucidates the real policy of Germany, Austria, Prussia, France, Russia and Great Britain. This little sketch is written in a most concise and lucid style. The author's breadth of mind and comprehensive grasp of the situation, with its many complicated bearings, helps to throw light on many a diplomatic problem. In politics Philip James Bailey avoids ranging himself on the side of the Liberal party, for the reason, he states, that "*Liberalism is a principle too vague to supply a distinct policy, except at the expense of its own constituency.*" Yet he does not shrink from condemning the aggressive policy of England when conducive to war, which he considers to be "*the inevitable result of vicious and selfish policy.*"

In his brief survey of England's foreign policy, he lays marked stress on the fact that the English Press is invariably too ready to take the part of agitators in all parts of the world, except where England's own territorial interests are at stake. He concludes by asking, "*Might not a vast deal be said by sympathetic Poles in favour of reviving the extinct kingdom of Wales? Did not his late Majesty, King Edward, perpetrate unheard-of enormities in the reduction of that ancient and illustrious nation?*"

Prior to the publication of these two, he wrote "The Mystic," which appeared in 1885, but this work fell far short of the genius displayed by the author in "Festus," and indeed this poem stands apart by itself as superior to anything of its kind ever penned, either by its author or any other writer of this century. The rapidity with which it was composed—within the brief space of three years—adds to the wonder and admiration which readers of "Festus" experience. The poetical gems that are scattered so profusely throughout the entire work, are by no means confined to the field of theology. Human love inspires many of the most beautiful passages, and we have the poet telling us :

"'Tis love which mostly destines our life,
What makes the world in after life I know not,
For our horizon alters as we age :
Power only can make up for lack of love—
Power of some sort. The mind at one time grows
So fast, it falls ; and then its stretch is more
Than its strength ; but as it opes, love fills it up ;
Like to the stamen in the flower of life,
Till for the time we well nigh grow all love ;
And soon we feel the want of one kind heart
To love what's well, and to forgive what's ill
In us,—that love we play for, at all risks."

In common with many of the greatest writers, notably, Christopher Marlowe, Shakspeare, Thackeray, and others, Philip Bailey champions the faith in love at first sight, and in "Festus" he gives voice to this belief :

"Thy love to me was perfect from the first
Even as the rainbow in its native skies ;
It did not grow, let meaner things mature.
The rainbow dies in heaven, and not on earth,
But love can never die ; from world to world,
Up the high wheel of heav'n, it lives for aye.
Life is the brief disunion of that nature
Which hath been one and same in heaven ere now,
And shall be yet again, renewed by death."

But whether love, life or death are his theme, Bailey's own masterful genius dominates and illumines them all. In a most exquisite passage touching on early death, he glorifies the fate of those who die young, concluding with the following beautiful metaphor :

" There is a firefly in the southern clime
 Which shineth only when upon the wing ;
 So is it with the mind : when once we rest
 We darken. On ! said God unto the soul
 As to the earth, for ever. On it goes
 A rejoicing native of the infinite—
 As is a bird of air—an orb of heaven.
 Death is another life. We bow our heads
 At going out, we think, and enter straight
 Another golden chamber of the king's,
 Larger than this we leave, and lovelier."

Even the "Beauties of Festus," with descriptive index, though carefully compiled and published in 1884, fails to convey any adequate idea of the marvellous beauty and power of the poem. In the luxuriance of the descriptive passages, the reader is reminded of the poetical imagery of Shelley's writings, but how great is the contrast between these two master minds, both in their aims and conclusions. While Shelley chants the pæan of materialism, and admits no life beyond the grave, deeming that happiness lies in this life only, and should be the chief aim of humanity ; Bailey, on the other hand, tells us that "this life," this world is not enough for us ; they are nothing to the measure of our mind. For place we must have space, for time we must have eternity, and for a spirit godhood :

" From life to death—from death to life
 We hurry round to God,
 And leave behind us nothing but
 The path that we have trod."

Unlike the generality of metaphorical and psychological poems, "Festus" solves the ethical problems which others are content to suggest. In 1864 the poet seems to have finally retired from an active literary life, as, with the exception of "The Universal Hymn," published in 1867, he has not contributed to the literary world. He spent the greater part of the twelve years, from 1864 to 1876, in Jersey, leaving his retreat from time to time to visit Switzerland, France and Italy. He was in France when the Franco-German war broke out, and at the time of the great eruption of Vesuvius, in 1872, he was present. After returning from Italy, he lived some years near Ifracombe, but left there in 1885, and then resided at Blackheath ; he afterwards settled at Nottingham. And here, at the ad-

vanced age of eighty-one, the great poet rests from his labours, surrounded by relatives and the early friends of his boyhood, himself the most striking exemplification of his own declaration :

" He most lives
Who thinks the most—feels the noblest—acts the best.
Life's but a means unto an end—that end,
Beginning, mean, and end to all things—God."

Juanita.

By CHARLOTTE A. PRICE.

Author of "SIR HARRY GREY," "MORS ET VITA," etc.

CHAPTER I.

" Could aught be sweet again, or aught be fair,
Or near, or dear to me, who had lost all,
Made life worth living ? "

HERBERT E. CLARKE.

It was June, the month of roses. A pleasant breeze stirred the leaves of the fine old elms under which Juanita Tregarth sat absorbed in thought. Her hat had fallen off, and the lovely masses of her rich auburn hair caught the rays of the setting sun and shone like a golden aureole round her head. Her large, dark eyes gazed intently across the sunny lawn and green fields towards the distant chain of hills that bounded the horizon ; but she was unconscious of the view, for her mind was busy with the day-dreams of a girl's first love : and one face rose before her mental vision which seemed to blot out all other objects.

Juanita, as her name betokened, had Spanish blood in her veins. Captain Tregarth, having contracted while young the love of a wandering life, left the army on the death of his father and spent most of his time abroad. When staying in Madrid he met a young Spanish girl, the only child of Señora de Peres, whose beauty and sweet disposition so completely enthralled him, that, after a short and ardent wooing, he won her for his bride. One brief year of

married happiness followed, and then Captain Tregarth was left alone, a broken-hearted man, with a tiny babe depending upon his love and care.

Little Juanita would have fared badly if her father had been her only protector. He was too much absorbed in grief to notice his child. The servants proved idle and careless, and the young couple had led too secluded a life, wrapped up in themselves and their own happiness, to make many friends. But, fortunately, an old nurse of Mrs. Tregarth's had followed the young bride to her new home, and as she had worshipped its mother so she adored the infant. She lavished the utmost care and tenderness upon the helpless babe, and it grew and flourished well in such capable hands.

Soon after the death of his wife the spirit of restlessness broke out afresh in Captain Tregarth, and he determined to join an expedition organised to explore some of the ruined cities of the East. But, alas! for the futility of all human plans! The devastating hand of fever stretched itself over the city of Madrid, and Captain Tregarth was one of the first victims to succumb to its power. He lived just long enough to settle his worldly affairs and confide his little daughter to the care of a married sister in England, and then he passed away, content to say farewell to a world which had become void of love and interest to him since the death of his beloved companion.

In due time Juanita and her nurse arrived safely in England; and as Mrs. Cardew had no family, the little orphan was all the more tenderly welcomed. She and her husband took Juanita to their hearts at once; the child never felt the loss of her own parents. Each want was supplied as soon as expressed; and as the years flew past the pretty child grew into a tall, slender and lovely maiden.

The hall-door of Oakleigh Manor always stood open in summer time, hospitality being widely practised within the spacious rooms of that luxurious house. Sounds of laughter and cheerful voices roused Juanita from her reverie, and she became aware that afternoon tea was in full progress, at which her presence would be expected. She was disinclined to leave the fresh air and fragrant flowers for the confined atmosphere of a room. One of her marked characteristics—doubtless inherited from her Spanish mother—being the love of an outdoor life.

But as she lingered, there came a lull in the chatter of her aunt's guests, and the strains of a sweet tenor voice fell upon her ears: a

voice that was quickly becoming all too dear to Juanita, and which drew her loitering footsteps towards the house. A group of men and women were gathered round their charming hostess, enjoying the present hour apparently without a care, while they sipped "the cup that cheers but not inebriates"; their flirtations, talking and laughter momentarily hushed by the spell cast over them in the singer's voice.

Captain Ferrars was a man of distinguished appearance, slenderly made and tall of stature. His features were clean cut and expressive; the nose Grecian; the rather full lips half hidden by a long, silky moustache; while thick waves of curling reddish-brown hair covered a well-shaped head. An air of dignity marked his actions; and when he ceased singing and turned to greet Juanita, it became evident that his attractions were further increased by a pair of hazel eyes, having that pathetic look in their clear depths which we so often see in those of a faithful dog.

Although her acquaintance with Captain Ferrars had only lasted three days—during which time he had been staying at Oakleigh Manor—Juanita knew that nevermore would her heart be free.

"She loved him with that love that was her doom."

The strange inexplicable attraction that draws one soul to another had laid hold of the dreamy, imaginative girl, and she became entangled in love's meshes without a struggle. That she knew very little of Captain Ferrars' antecedents gave her no concern; she felt, through all the fibres of her being, that he was the one man on God's earth for her. Mr. Cardew's voice broke the spell that bound her.

"Come here, Nita," said he, "and give me an account of yourself; you must not play truant like this."

"Oh, it is so lovely out of doors, dear uncle; I cannot stay in the house a minute longer than I am obliged," replied the girl, as she accepted the cup of tea that Captain Ferrars handed to her and chose one of her favourite cakes.

"Well, we will have tea on the lawn to-morrow under your shady trees," said Mrs. Cardew; "and now sing to us, dear child; Captain Ferrars has enchanted us with his voice, and you have missed a great treat."

"Will you try this duet with me, Miss Tregarth?" asked Captain

Ferrars, as he selected a sheet of music from the pile that lay upon the piano and held it towards her.

Juanita smiled acquiescence, and walked across the room to the piano with the graceful dignity that accompanied all her actions. She had a sweet, but not powerful, soprano, and the two voices blended admirably, the sad pathetic words of the song being heard distinctly through the room. From that day Captain Ferrars and Juanita often sang together. Both were passionately fond of music, and the evenings seemed shorn of half their pleasure to Mr. and Mrs. Cardew if these two voices were silent.

Among the guests staying at Oakleigh Manor during these bright June days was a schoolfellow of Juanita's.

Her father, Mr. Harmer, having amassed a large fortune in Australia by sheep farming, returned to spend the remainder of his life in "the old country." Laura was his darling and only child; he could deny her nothing, but the indulgence lavished upon her had, unfortunately, fostered a selfish and domineering character. In warm countries girls develop quickly, and Laura was introduced into society at Sydney when only sixteen. But Mrs. Harmer, finding her daughter's education very deficient, by dint of persuasion and entreaties induced her on their arrival in England to go to school for a year.

While under the care of the excellent Miss Roberts the two girls became acquainted. The attraction between them was, probably, the total dissimilarity of their tastes and dispositions; for if there is any truth in the saying that "opposite characters suit each other best in marriage," there is no doubt that friendship's bonds are more frequently formed and firmly cemented by contrasts than by affinities—the one nature supplying what the other lacks and feels the need of obtaining.

An intense love of admiration was Laura Harmer's greatest fault. She could not endure to see another preferred before herself; and though, as yet, she was not aware of it Captain Ferrars had begun to take a prominent place in her thoughts. His good looks, gentlemanly bearing and beautiful voice had made a great impression upon her mind. To see his attentions, therefore, bestowed upon Juanita roused the demon of jealousy in Laura's heart; and, never having been denied anything which she wished to obtain, she determined that no one should come between her and the handsome young officer.

CHAPTER II.

"Doubt, a blank twilight of the heart, which mars
All sweetest colours in its dimness same ;
A soul mist, thro' whose rifts familiar stars,
Beholding, we misname."

"WE must work diligently to-day," said Mrs. Cardew, as she took her place at the breakfast table the following morning ; "no laziness will be allowed, so after I have arranged my domestic affairs let us meet together for rehearsal."

"All right," assented her nephew, Harry Grant. "We will hurry up and do our best to shine as stars in the firmament of Newcombe."

"I think we know our parts, Miss Tregarth," said Captain Ferrars, turning to Juanita ; "but, of course, we must obey orders from headquarters."

Juanita was looking pale, for her sleep had been disturbed by restless dreams. Had a presentiment of evil reached her ? Nevertheless, she gave a smiling assent to Launcelot's remark, and rising from the table walked to the open window. But when Laura Harmer saw that Captain Ferrars was following Juanita, she twined her arm affectionately in that of her friend, and drew her steps across the lawn to the seat under the elms.

A large fire had lately raged in Newcombe, the nearest town to Oakfield Manor, at which one of the firemen received such severe injuries, whilst endeavouring to rescue the inmates from one of the burning houses, that he succumbed shortly after. Mr. and Mrs. Cardew, with the assistance of the officers at Newcombe barracks, had arranged some theatricals for the benefit of the poor man's widow, who was left totally destitute with an expected increase to an already large family.

To pose artistically was one of Miss Harmer's ambitions, and her abundant fair hair, blue eyes and general adaptability lent themselves favourably to critical situations. But to "weep with those who weep" and truly to sympathise with pain and distress was, in reality, perfectly foreign to her nature, though she could simulate and act a part passing well. It was this hypocritical pretence that had deluded Juanita Tregarth into making a friend of her.

But we walk the paths of life with a veil over our eyes that is often, alas ! only lifted when too late !

Having defeated Launcelot's wish to follow Juanita, Laura considered it a favourable moment for the furtherance of her own designs. She also thought she could ascertain something of the feelings that lay hidden beneath Juanita's calm exterior and cautiously shaped her questions.

"Do you really care for this stupid play, Nita?" she asked, with a yawn. "I think it a very silly production, and am glad I have not been asked to take a prominent part in it."

"I dislike the publicity," replied Juanita, "and only consented to act because my aunt wished me to do so. I wanted to help the poor widow, though I could do so without all this display."

"I will willingly take your place if you wish to escape the ordeal," said Laura, seeing a chance not to be neglected of being in close proximity with Captain Ferrars. "I could soon learn the part, a few hours' study would enable me to master it."

Now Juanita had lately guessed that in spite of her protestations to the contrary, Laura longed to be cast for the heroine in the contemplated entertainment.

Being totally free from any suspicion of Miss Harmer's *penchant* for Captain Ferrars, the kind-hearted girl thought she could please her friend and be relieved of a not very agreeable *rôle* by relinquishing her part in the theatricals.

It was true that Juanita regretted the disappointment she intuitively divined Launcelot Ferrars would experience; but acting in public was not to her taste, and therefore she decided to accept Laura's offer, if Mrs. Cardew did not object.

Her aunt was, at first, much annoyed at Juanita's determination. However, she soon conquered the chagrin she felt. But when Captain Ferrars was told of the proposed change, Laura saw, by the look that passed over his face, how small was her chance of winning his affections.

"What will Miss Masters say when she hears that you have shirked your part just at the last?" he asked, when they were alone, casting a look of reproach at Juanita. "I think the chief pleasure she felt in writing the play was that you would so well personate the heroine."

"Oh, Laura will make a far better *Gertrude* than I should have

JUANITA.

done," replied Juanita. "Her hair and complexion are fair, and she will not be troubled with stage-fright; whereas I cannot bear the thought of confronting all those up-turned faces in the town-hall of Newcombe on Tuesday evening."

"It is not necessary to describe the theatricals. They passed off with *éclat*. The seats were well-filled on the momentous night, and Laura appeared to advantage, but she knew that she was as far as ever from shaking the allegiance of Captain Ferrars to her friend.

A little coolness had sprung up between him and Juanita, on the day she refused to take part in the play. But far from desiring the society of Miss Harmer, Captain Ferrars disliked and distrusted her. He was conscious that she contrived to give an air of intimacy to their conversation which did not exist, for it was, in reality, purely trivial. She, also, deferred to his opinion on most subjects, managed to be his partner at tennis, and claimed his attention whenever an opportunity occurred.

In vain Launcelot tried to detach himself from the web this scheming girl so skilfully wove. It grew stronger day by day, and he felt, to his infinite rage and disgust, that, sometimes, his own action furthered her designs. But Laura's plans were so carefully laid, that without being rude and ungentlemanly, he could not always escape from her blandishments.

Juanita watched this constant companionship, and doubts of Launcelot's truth arose in her mind. She became cold and distant towards him, fearing that she had given her love to one who did not value it. The poor girl's heart grew heavy, although she hid its sadness under an apparently cheerful manner.

"What a handsome man Captain Ferrars is," said Laura, as the two girls were exchanging confidences in the solitude of the midnight hour. "I wonder if he has private means, for though I like him very much, and his attentions are quite marked, as you must see, dear, I am sure my father would never let me marry a man without a fortune, especially an officer in an infantry regiment."

Poor Juanita winced at this speech, but, though Laura scanned her features closely, she did not detect any change in their expression.

"I expect your father would not oppose your choice if he knew your happiness was concerned in it," answered Juanita quietly. "Captain Ferrars comes of a good Irish family, and though his fortune is but small now, he has expectations."

"I really thought he was *épris* with you at first," returned Laura, "but it would never do for you to set your affections in that quarter. Mr. Cardew has evidently made up his mind that George Bell shall be your future husband."

"Ah, poor uncle," sighed Juanita, "his hopes then are doomed to disappointment, for I shall never marry George."

"No doubt it would be a very suitable match," said Miss Harmer, "and I can understand Mr. Cardew desiring it. But surely you, Nita, could never be induced to settle down with that thick-pated, though well-intentioned young man, who seems to live for nothing but hunting, shooting and sports of all kinds."

"Oh," replied Juanita, laughing, "George is not quite so stupid as you think. Ashfield is only three miles away, and we have been friends from childhood. I know young Bell has a kind heart and most generous nature, and I like him very much, but my uncle and George, too, are both aware that I have no intention of becoming Mrs. Bell."

"By that reply," said Laura, "I can surely conclude that he has already asked you to be his wife; and, as you think so highly of him, no doubt a little perseverance on his part will win you in the end."

"No," said Juanita, "I shall never marry George Bell. But I am too tired for any more gossip, it is getting late;" and rising from the low seat she had occupied, she kissed her friend and retired to her own room.

Yes, she was tired and sad and sorely troubled, but sleep fled away from her eyes that night. He is a coy visitant, and often withdraws his presence when its comfort is most needed. Ruthlessly Juanita tossed from side to side, till the grey dawn of early morning stole in at her open window, and the sweet notes of a thrush made melody through the silent air.

Various scenes from the past week rose before her eyes during those quiet, sleepless hours. Being of a loyal and trustful nature, she never, for a moment, suspected Laura of treachery. The sting of the sorrow that overwhelmed the poor girl lay in the fear that her heart had passed out of her own keeping, and that the love she felt for Captain Ferrars was neither valued nor returned.

And yet, was it not on her, she asked, that his looks were fixed, when, at the request of Mr. Cardew (who liked the quaint old ballad) Launcelot sang, in his enchanting tenor voice:—

"Soft o'er the fountain, ling'ring falls the Southern moon :
Far o'er the mountain, breaks the day too soon !
In thy dark eyes' splendour, where the warm light loves to dwell,
Weary looks, yet tender, speak their fond farewell !
Nita ! Juanita ! ask thy soul if we should part ?
Nita ! Juanita ! lean thou on my heart.

"When in thy dreaming, moons like these shall shine again,
And daylight beaming, prove thy dreams are vain ;
Wilt thou not relenting, for thine absent lover sigh ?
In thy heart consenting to a prayer gone by.
Nita ! Juanita ! let me linger by thy side !
Nita ! Juanita ! be my own fair bride !"

"But what if it be true," pondered Juanita, "that Captain Ferrars is in love with Laura, as she thinks, and has never given a serious thought to me." At this idea, the warm southern blood that ran in her veins flamed with indignation, for she knew that he had misled her by his obvious admiration before the theatricals.

Before the theatricals!—Ah, there lay her mistake ! A flash of light illumined the past, and showed in a moment her foolishness in yielding to Laura's suggestion. She had exposed Launcelot to the charms not only of a beautiful woman, but to one who was, also, an heiress.

"Doubtless he thinks I do not care for him !" cried the unhappy girl, as she recollected his look of reproach.

CHAPTER III.

"For us to love !

Oh ! is it not taking sorrow to our hearts,
Binding her there ?"

"Why must our souls thus love and then be riven ?"

MRS. HEMANS.

AFTER spending a week at Oakleigh Manor, Captain Ferrars returned to Newcombe barracks. Had Juanita but known it, he, too, felt sad and perplexed, for he loved her devotedly, and entertained no feelings for Miss Harmer but those of contempt and dislike. He was a man of the world, but the soul of honour, and quickly saw through Laura's schemes to ensnare him and separate him from her friend.

Far from being of a sordid mind, Captain Ferrars would never marry a woman unless he could give her his entire love and respect, and raise her to that pedestal in his thoughts, on which every man, who is worthy of the name, always enthrones the woman he desires to make his wife. If a favourable opportunity had occurred, it is possible he might have spoken to Juanita during his visit, but her sudden coldness and the way in which Miss Harmer contrived to hamper his actions, induced him to keep silence.

But the most important reason of all was his present pecuniary position. He knew that Juanita was the idol of her uncle and aunt, and would, probably, inherit their property. Then, was it likely, however good his future prospects might be, that Mr. Cardew would allow his niece to marry a man whose income, at the very outside, now only amounted to five hundred a year?

Waiting for dead men's shoes is sorry work, and though Launcelot Ferrars was the next heir to an old and wealthy relative, he could not build any hopes of acceptance on such a slight foundation. His kinsman held no intercourse whatever with the young officer, and would do nothing to advance his interests. Old and miserly, he preferred the complete isolation in which he lived, to the joy that warms the heart when it indulges in the exercise of benevolent actions.

And so Captain Ferrars kept silence. He hoped that when Laura Harmer returned home, Juanita would resume her usual friendly manner. Then he determined to tell her how dear she really was to him, and ask her to decide his fate.

A few more weeks of delightful summer weather sped away all too quickly. Meantime Captain Ferrars came often to Oakleigh Manor, for he was a great favourite there.

"I have some bad news for you," said Mr. Cardew, looking across the luncheon table to his wife one day in the beginning of September. "I met Colonel Trevor in Newcombe, and he told me that orders came down from the War Office, this morning, for young Ferrars to leave the *dépôt*, and join his regiment at Gibraltar."

"I am very sorry to hear it," replied Mrs. Cardew. "I have always liked Captain Ferrars best of all the officers quartered at Newcombe. We shall miss him very much, and his singing, too, for he has a lovely voice, besides being first rate at tennis."

"From Gibraltar he will go to India," said Mr. Cardew, "so it will be 'good-bye' for some years, I suppose."

"I wonder what Laura Harmer will think of it. She seems very much taken with him, though it looks as if the love was all on her side."

"Young minx," laughed her husband, "she flirts with all the men in turn."

"Yes, and has no love for anyone but herself," said Mrs. Cardew, who had more penetration than her husband.

"Where is Juanita?" he asked. "I miss the child's sweet face. It never seems right unless I get a kiss from her when I come home."

"She and Laura are always so unpunctual that I urged them to go and dress early. I suppose you have forgotten, as usual, that we are due at the Bells' garden party this afternoon."

"Ah, true, so we are," answered Mr Cardew, "it had quite slipped my memory." At which his wife laughed, for she knew him to be utterly incorrigible in forgetting his social engagements, although in matters of business no one could exceed his punctuality.

Amid the hurry of starting to the Bells', Mrs. Cardew forgot the sudden departure of Captain Ferrars, and did not mention it to her niece until they were alighting from the carriage. She failed, therefore, to see the pallor that overspread Juanita's face. But Laura, always on the watch, cast a quick glance at her, and saw enough to confirm the suspicions she had previously entertained, that Juanita was anything but indifferent to Launcelot Ferrars.

Fortunately, Juanita was endowed with a great gift of self-control, and she quickly recovered her composure, but the light of day was overcast and the weary sinking of her heart told its own tale.

From among the guests she saw the tall form she loved so well, emerge and come towards her across the green turf. Spontaneously their hands met in a firm clasp. Distrust and doubt fled away for the moment as they gazed into each other's eyes, and the anguish of parting rent the veil asunder that hid their mutual love.

"You have heard of my sudden recall, Miss Tregarth?" said he. "It was quite unexpected, and has upset all my plans."

"Yes, my uncle heard the news in Newcombe this morning. I am sure we shall miss you very much."

"Think of me sometimes when I am in India. You will be always in my thoughts; I shall never forget the happy days that I have spent at Oakleigh Manor," said Ferrars, looking at her with his

faithful brown eyes. "Dog's eyes," as Laura Harmer contemptuously called them one day.

"Must you go?" asked Juanita, softly, and with crimson cheeks.

"I fear there is no help for it," he answered despondently. "Those tribes on the frontier are getting so troublesome, we may expect a war before long."

"When do you start?" asked Juanita.

"This is Tuesday, and I leave Newcombe in three days. I have only a week in which to get ready before I embark. I will come to-morrow and say farewell. Will you give me a chance to explain some things that may be puzzling you, dearest Juanita?"

Her name slipped from his lips inadvertently, as he felt the longing to comfort and cheer her. These few sentences had been exchanged while they sauntered down a shady path in the lovely grounds of Oakfield, but as they suddenly turned a corner, they came upon a group of people with young Bell in the centre, and all privacy was at an end.

Juanita bore up bravely during the long hours that elapsed before she found herself alone at night; then worn out and exhausted, she gave way to grief. A burst of weeping somewhat relieved her over-charged heart.

One bright hope shone through the darkness—"I shall see him to-morrow," she said; and soothed by this thought, Juanita, at last, fell asleep.

Mr. and Mrs. Cardew were quite unaware of Juanita's love for Launcelot Ferrars. They cherished the hope that she would be the wife of George Bell, whose estate adjoined Oakfield Manor. By this arrangement they would not lose the society of their niece, who had become like a daughter to them, and the united properties would make one of the finest in the county. At the same time they would never have wished her to marry a man she did not love. Juanita and George had grown up together in close intercourse as near neighbours, and the friendship that existed between the young people blinded her uncle and aunt to the true state of affairs. George, poor fellow, desired nothing better than to make Juanita his wife. But he knew her heart had gone forth to another, for love is a great quickener of the perceptions.

The following afternoon was one of the most beautiful of this glorious summer:—

"We will have tea under the elms," said Mrs. Cardew, looking at Juanita. "You are pale to-day, my child; the heat tries you, and yet you ought not to be overcome by it, when sunny Spain was the land of your birth."

"I am quite well, dear aunt, and revel in the warmth, this lovely blue sky and balmy air. My mother's country could not be more beautiful than old England is in my eyes."

"Do you think you would like India?" whispered Laura with a slight sneer. "Perhaps Launcelot Ferrars will ask you to go to the gorgeous East some day. I wonder what your aunt would say to that proposal."

A crimson blush rose on Juanita's fair cheeks, and she turned hastily away and began to busy herself with the cups and saucers. The comfortable basket-chairs soon found occupants, and the tennis-players, having finished their game, gladly partook of the various refreshments provided for them. In vain Captain Ferrars tried to speak a few words with Juanita alone. She was such a favourite that she was surrounded all the afternoon by a small crowd of admirers. At length an opportunity seemed to occur, and they passed together through the open window and entered the morning-room. But Laura Harmer saw the movement and followed them, crying, "Oh, Captain Ferrars, sing one more song before you go;" and then he knew he had lost his chance, and had no alternative but to comply with her request.

Breathing something like an imprecation on this meddlesome girl, he bent over Juanita and whispered—but not so low as to be unheard by Miss Harmer—"I will write to you to-night."

Shortly afterwards he took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Cardew. Then taking the hand of Juanita between his own, he pressed it warmly, and gazing into her eyes with a passionate look of love, bade her farewell.

CHAPTER IV.

"I shall remember while the light lives yet,
And in the darkness I shall not forget."

JUANITA passed a restless night, and only fell asleep with the dawn. Rising early, she flung on a dressing-gown and ran downstairs to

her uncle's study, where the key of the letter bag was always kept. She quickly found it, and going to the hall, unlocked the bag, and spread out its contents hastily upon the table. Alas! there was no letter for her!

She turned them over and over with eager, trembling hands, but could not find the one she sought. It was not there. Cold and stricken to the heart she regained her room, but no tears came to relieve the pain that overwhelmed her. All the old fears returned with double force. Her soul was agonised by doubts; then gradually, a ray of hope returned as she thought "He may not have had time to write last evening;" or, "Perhaps, he may find an opportunity of coming to see me once more."

She hung about the grounds all day without avail, and in the evening walked up the hill behind the house, from whence a view of Newcombe barracks could be obtained. As she stood gazing across the lonely valley, the sound of the bugle floated to her ears from the distant hill. But Captain Ferrars neither came nor wrote.

The following day, her uncle remarked, "Well, the officers and men of the 102nd left Newcombe this morning, and they embark for India on Wednesday. I wonder what the next lot will be like."

"I am not fond of changes," said Mrs. Cardew.

"Neither am I," echoed Juanita.

There were yet three days in which she might receive the promised letter.

"I will wait," she said. "Well waited is well done!" But those three days passed and still no letter came. He was not ill she knew, for her uncle had exchanged a few words with him in Newcombe.

Ah! then he must be false indeed!

Laura Harmer left Oakleigh Manor the day after Launcelot's last visit there. She and Juanita never met again. In the following October the heiress married a rising young barrister. Her letters came with less frequency and at longer intervals, and then ceased altogether. Nothing was heard of her for some years.

As the weeks and months dragged slowly on, Juanita's step grew listless, and the rose tints left her cheeks. Her pillow was often wet with tears at night, and as they fell she seemed to hear the sweet voice of Ferrars as he sang in the gloaming. Mr. and Mrs. Cardew watched the failure of Juanita's health with great concern.

Everything that love or money could procure was showered upon her. They consulted eminent doctors, who always gave the same advice. "Change of scene and freedom from anxiety."

"*Anxiety!* What can our petted darling know of that dread foe?" cried Mrs. Cardew. "She has not a single care."

Sir William Green looked, as usual, imperturbable, but repeated his instructions, muttering something about "inherited delicacy"—"feeble action of the heart," etc. All of which conveyed no meaning to Mrs. Cardew, who was the embodiment of health and strength.

In the autumn they went to Scotland, where the pure air revived Juanita's spirits, and she became, apparently, much the same girl that she had always been. Her laugh, perhaps, was not quite so joyous, nor her step as buoyant as a few months before, and a sudden faintness which occasionally came on after over-exertion caused uneasiness to those around, but as it quickly passed away, and seemed to leave no ill-effects behind, nothing serious was thought of it.

"How I wish Juanita would listen to George and return his affection," said Mrs. Cardew, one day, shortly after their return home. "He's a good, steady fellow, and would make an excellent husband."

"She is but young," answered Mr. Cardew. "Let her alone, she will marry him all in good time."

For this worthy couple had not given up their plan, although there did not seem to be the slightest grain of hope on which to rest for its fulfilment.

George Bell came and went as of yore, and Juanita was glad to see him; but he knew he did not make any progress in winning her affections. When he approached the subject nearest his heart, she always laughed it off with some ready jest, or skilfully parried his appeals. And so the years passed slowly away.

It was again the month of June, and Juanita sat beneath the elms as of old. She looked pale and fragile. On her left hand shone a brilliant circle of diamonds, and as she idly turned the ring from side to side, little sparkles of light and colour flashed from the glittering gems, a weary sigh escaped her lips, and her sweet eyes filled with tears.

"And so it is George, after all, who will be my husband," she murmured. "I pray I may never see Launcelot Ferrars again."

Yes, the wish of the Cardews had been realised, and the patient love of George Bell rewarded. Juanita was his promised bride. No letter had ever come from Captain Ferrars, nor had anything been heard of him after he sailed for India.

Men, as a rule, are not good letter writers, and seldom keep up a correspondence.

In the busy world of society, too, the absent are soon forgotten, and so Juanita heard no tidings of her faithless lover, and, in a short time, his name ceased to be mentioned. The sharpness of the suffering she endured, began, after a while, to subside, and a dull, apathetic indifference took its place. But the remembrance of those few weeks never passed away. The memory of their joy and bitterness lay hidden in the secret chambers of her soul.

Launcelot had, one day in the "long ago," given Juanita a rose, and she kept it still. Its tints and fragrance had then been beautiful, and her hopes, too, had at that time been tinged with the glory of love. Now, the rose, and her dreams of happiness, were both alike, withered and dead. The faithful devotion of George Bell had, at last, touched Juanita's heart; especially when she contrasted his fidelity with the heartless conduct of Captain Ferrars. She began to see how much pleasure she could give her uncle and aunt by this marriage, and so she consented to become George's wife. Her attachment to young Bell being at least sincere, if not passionate. The wedding was fixed to take place in September. Sitting quietly under the elms, Juanita's thoughts fled back to that day in June, three years ago, when she had been loth to leave their grateful shade and mix with her aunt's guests. Was her unwillingness a premonition of future suffering, she wondered?

As she thus communed, wrapped in oblivion, she found Graves, the old butler, standing beside her, holding a salver, on which lay a card. She took it up mechanically, but at the sight of the name it bore, an electric shock passed through her frame. The name was that of Sir Launcelot Ferrars, who was even now coming to meet her.

Indignation lent her courage. Rising, she drew up her slight figure with an air of pride, and asked, "To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?"

Eagerly he seized her hand, and cried, "Ah, Juanita, my darling! do not judge me hardly. We were deceived and separated by your

false friend, Miss Harmer. She has written and confessed the deception she practised on us, dear one. See, here is her letter, and the one I wrote to you, which she abstracted from the letter bag the morning it arrived at your house."

Gently he drew Juanita down on the seat and placed himself beside her, for he saw a pallor as of death spread over her face, and her trembling limbs refused their office.

With a gesture of repugnance she took up the envelope that bore the handwriting of her false and ungrateful friend. Inside she found two letters, one from Laura addressed to Sir Launcelot Ferrars. The other, with the seal still unbroken, was in the handwriting of her lover.

"Read it, Juanita," he cried, "and exonerate me from all blame."

She broke the seal and read the ardent words of love that, had they come at the rightful time, would have made Juanita a happy woman, but now they only increased the anguish and grief that she suffered.

"Too late, too late," moaned the poor girl. "Nothing can repair the fearful wrong she has done us!"

"Ah, do not say so; this pain will pass, and we shall yet be happy," said Ferrars, all unknowing of the tie that bound her.

But Juanita held her hand towards him with its shining gems, and fixing her sad eyes upon his, said, "I am George Bell's affianced wife."

The shock was great, but Ferrars, undaunted, begged her to tell George all the circumstances, and ask him to set her free.

He pleaded well, for he loved her passionately. But Juanita sat stricken and despairing. If she yielded to his persuasions what sorrow would fall upon poor George; and how great would be the disappointment of her kind uncle and aunt. On the other hand her heart spoke wildly in Launcelot's favour, and her own too. For at the sight of his face and the sound of his voice she felt her love return in all its old force. She knew and realised that it was Launcelot Ferrars she loved still and him only.

He listened patiently and with tenderness to all she said, but he could extract no promise that she would be his wife.

"Oh, Nita! you do not love me or you would not cast me off," he exclaimed, in his misery.

She turned towards him and murmured: "I *have* loved you, I *do* love you, and I shall *always* love you."

At these words Captain Ferrars took her in his arms and rained kisses on her mouth, her hair and her hands. Juanita drew herself slowly away, and looking once again in his face, cried with tears: "Farewell! Farewell! my beloved!"

"Oh, grant me one more interview," he said, entreatingly, hoping still to move her from the decision she had taken.

Loving him as she did, was it to be wondered that Juanita agreed?

"To part is like death, Launcelot," she said. "My uncle and aunt are away on a visit for a few days, and George is also absent. I will see you once more. Come to-morrow at this hour. I shall be here under these trees to meet you."

Lingeringly they parted—with clasped hands, and gazing into each other's faces as though they would imprint the well-loved features on their memories for ever. The next day Captain Ferrars, full of eagerness and hope, kept his tryst at the appointed hour.

Entering the grounds of Oakleigh Manor he walked towards the grand old elms. But Juanita was not there.

He crossed the velvet turf and looked in at the open window of the morning-room, one of her favourite resorts.

Juanita sat in the low chair she usually occupied. Her back was turned towards him, but Ferrars could see her white dress trailing on the floor.

"Nita, dearest!" he called softly. "I am here." But Juanita neither moved nor spoke.

He entered the room, and leaning down gazed intently into the calm white face.

"She is asleep," he said; "no wonder."

Sleepless nights make weary days, and of these Juanita had known many. He took her soft white hand, but it lay irresponsive in his loving clasp.

"Awake, awake, my darling," he cried. "Speak to me, Juanita." But no sound broke the silence.

Then something in the still and quiet form sent a ghastly thrill of apprehension through his heart. Torn with anguish he called her despairingly by every endearing name.

"Nita! Juanita!" he cried, aloud. "Come back, come back. Leave me not desolate and alone."

But the dead never come back.

His entreaties and his grief were alike unavailing. Juanita slept well at last.

At rest she lay, unconscious of his tears,
She neither heard nor grieved ;
For all was o'er that had distressed her here,
All, too, that had deceived.

In calmness there she lay, no earthly voice
Would ever reach her more ;
No loving words pierce through the mists that hide
The sight of that bright shore

Where she had entered on a life so blest,
Tranquil, serene and fair ;
We strive in vain to guess what were her thoughts
When she found entrance there.

Set free from this world—heaven before her spread—
What were her hopes and fears,
As the sweet notes of Seraph's music fell
On her enraptured ears ?

As the first glimpse of heaven's beauty met
Her awed, entranced sight,
And peace and bliss closed round her ravish'd soul,
Escaped from earth's dark night.

No voice comes back to tell ; all answering tones
Have with her spirit fled ;
And silence reigns, unbroken, quiet, deep,
The silence of the dead.

Johannes Brahms.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD,

Author of "HAYDN," "MOZART," etc., etc.,

ON April the 3rd, 1897, Johannes Brahms, one of the greatest musicians of his day, passed away at Vienna, at the age of sixty-four years.

As one great man after another vanishes from our sight, and his place knows him no more, we sorrowfully look round and ask, who is worthy to succeed him.

The world looks very blank and empty. Time sweeps away the great, with the little, and none can stay his hand. We must remember for our comfort, that out of the darkness fresh stars will arise, it has always been so in the world's history, and will be, to the end of time. It will be long, however, before Johannes Brahms can be replaced in the world of music, in which he was indeed a shining light.

Brahms was born at Hamburg on May 7th, 1833. His father was a double bass player, and gave him his first lessons in music. Later on, he took lessons of Edward Marxsen, of Altona. Unlike Mozart, he does not appear remarkable for any extraordinary musical talents in early life, in fact, he never really made his mark until he was twenty years of age. We hear of him, indeed, as playing a set of variations before a Hamburg audience, with much applause, but Marxsen, with great wisdom, after this, withdrew his talented pupil entirely from public life, and kept him to hard study. Towards the end of this educational period, Brahms devoted himself to composition with the greatest ardour. The fruits of this application include three pianoforte sonatas. The last of these—Op. 5 in F minor—is a very beautiful work.

It was at Göttingen in 1853, that Brahms' musical career may be said to have begun. He was to have played Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata, with the extraordinary violinist Reményi, when to the intense disgust of Reményi, the pianoforte was found to be a semitone below pitch, and the fiddle would have to be tuned down. With the utmost coolness, Brahms came to the rescue, and suggested that he should play the pianoforte accompaniment in B flat, the original being A.

This he actually did without a book, and it was a task which only an extremely gifted musician could have accomplished.

Joachim who was present, in writing about this circumstance to a friend observed "Brahms has an altogether exceptional talent for composition, a gift that is enhanced by the unaffected modesty of his character. His playing too, gives every presage of a great artistic career, full of fire and energy, yet, if I may say so, unerring in its precision and certainty of touch. In brief, he is the most considerable musician of his age that I have ever met."

Robert Schumann also—a very keen and impartial critic—speaking of this says "Brahm's will prove a worthy successor to the great masters." Brahms, however, was so very retiring in his disposition, that he never cared to play in public, and made no great mark as a pianist. In 1854 he was asked to conduct at the Court of the Prince of Lippe Detmold, and thither he went for a short time. The duties, however, were uncongenial, and the air of a court never suited Johannes Brahms, therefore he soon went to Hamburg, his native town, and in 1862 finally settled at Vienna. By this time he had written much, but published little. In 1859 he published his first pianoforte concerto, in C minor, Op. 15, which was not appreciated. His next work was the exquisite orchestral serenade, which came into high favour. Occasionally, about this time he conducted concerts—notably at the Sing-Academie and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde at Vienna, but in his heart he detested a public platform, the whole bent of his mind was for quiet study. Alone he was master of his thoughts and musical ideas flowed freely. He composed two masterly sextets, and pianoforte quartets, also the splendid pianoforte quintets in F minor, Op. 34.

In 1862 Brahms and Wagner met at Vienna, but the two masters never became friends. With so much in common between these two great minds one would have expected them to coalesce at once, but they never did, and it is one of the curious questions of life, these strange affinities, these unaccountable likes and dislikes, never to be really explained.

In 1866, Brahms went with Joachim for a concert tour in Switzerland, and two years after, he gave his German Requiem to the world. This work was intended as a tribute to the memory of those who perished in 1866 in the Austro-Prussian war. It is a masterpiece, and has made Johannes Brahms for ever famous.

In 1871 he gave to the world the "Song of Destiny," which for beauty may almost take rank by the side of the "Requiem," and in 1876 Brahms produced at Carlsruhe the First Symphony in C minor, which is exceedingly fine, if not the best of his symphonies; the next year, the Cambridge University Musical Society invited Brahms to England, in order to conduct his Symphony as well as to receive the degree of Mus. Doc.; this offer, however, he declined on account of his dislike to travel; some time after, he again received an invitation to visit this country, and is said to have replied, "you have my music, why do you want me?"

In 1877 the Symphony in D, No. 2 was introduced at the Philharmonic Concerts at Vienna, and a little later at the Crystal Palace. This exquisite melody quickly became a favourite. Several other beautiful symphonies followed, but as years sped on, it became apparent that his best work was done. He did not, however, become idle. Sets of songs for one or more voices, double concertos for violin and violoncello, the beautiful clarinet Quintet in B minor, and several lovely, though short pianoforte pieces, were all produced in the closing years of his life.

Brahms was middle-sized, strongly-built, with blue eyes and a very long beard—the very type of a North German. Last year there were signs of his serious illness, cancer of the liver beginning to appear. His face assumed a yellow hue, his strong frame looked shrunk, dark circles showed themselves under his eyes, and soon there came that dread look which, once seen, can never be forgotten. That look, which, when we are watching over a beloved one, makes our hearts die within us! On March the 7th, Brahms for the last time appeared at a concert. This was given by the Philharmonic Society in Vienna, and commenced with the 4th Symphony in E minor.

Brahms was at the back, but the great applause which his work evoked compelled him to come forward, and then the change from the strong man to the failing invalid could be plainly seen, and it touched every heart. The audience cheered loudly, but many had tears in their eyes, as they thought of his immortal gifts to music, and felt that they were taking leave of him for ever. Johannes Brahms knew this only too well, and tears slowly filled his eyes.

On the 25th of March he took to his bed, from which he was never more to rise. He had never been married, and for the last eleven

years he had been faithfully watched over by Frau Truxa, the widow of a journalist. She nursed him tenderly in his last illness, and was with him when he died. He was touchingly grateful for every attention, and *Ach Danke* were the last words he spoke. On Saturday morning, the 3rd of April, seeing Madame Truxa could not subdue her emotion, he took her hand, and with tears rolling down his cheeks, fell back on the pillow and died. He had scarcely any relatives, with the exception of a step-mother and step-sister at Hamburg, of whom he was very fond. An intimate friend tells us that he gave away fully two-thirds of his handsome income in secret charities. In common with many great men, he had a shrinking from the thought of death, and although he left a properly drawn-up will, it was never signed. In it—after providing for his friends at Hamburg—he had left 15,000 florins to Frau Truxa the rest with all his most valuable MSS. and books to the Vienna Society of the Friends of Music, of which he was a director.

The Royal Berlin Academy of Arts sent a telegram of condolence to Vienna, with a well merited laurel wreath and a dedication ribbon.

On Tuesday, the 6th of April, 1897, all that was mortal of Johannes Brahms was laid to rest in the musicians' corner of the central cemetery at Vienna. The funeral was attended by a vast crowd of music lovers, and many deputations from Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

Monsieur Antonin Dvorak came from Prague, and the number of wreaths was so enormous that six carriages, besides the hearse, were crowded with them.

The Singverein, the Sing Academie, the Gesellschaft von Musikfreunde, were all very largely represented. Thus Brahms was greatly honoured in death as in life, and by his compositions acquired immortality even in this life.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

DURING the next few days Henrietta often looked at her beautiful languid mother with increased wistfulness. Ever since May's absence, constitutional indolence, fully encouraged, had grown upon Mrs. Godwin to a very great extent. She seldom came downstairs till two o'clock, and always had a siesta after tea. Sometimes she allowed Henrietta to play on the piano, or to read aloud for half an hour: but the books selected were all of a second-rate character: harmless, but mawkish to the last degree: French stories translated, or Italian novels. Mrs. Godwin never read or spoke anything but her native tongue in private life, and despite her long residence at Godwin's Worthy, talked what her friends called the prettiest broken English imaginable. Most people would have found it exhausting to keep down to her level intellectually, and though love is proverbially blind, there were times when Henrietta felt cramped without fully realizing what was the matter. Mrs. Godwin could not be said to dislike her daughter. She looked upon her as a dear, good girl, sadly devoid of tact. Not to put too fine a point upon the matter, Henrietta represented a failure. Having once made an unpardonable mistake in presenting herself as a twin daughter, instead of appearing as a son, nothing remained to be done but to place the offending intruder among the many disappointments in the background of life, and to see that she remained there.

But alas! just before May's return home, Mrs. Godwin's feelings received an unexpected shock where the behaviour of her second daughter was concerned.

Henrietta, discovered one sunny afternoon, stitching away at a great heap of black material, owned, in answer to her mother's astonished questioning, that the work represented part of a frock for a village child; a little girl, one of a large family. The mother had

died of consumption, the father had lately been ill. The eldest daughter at home was a cripple with rheumatism, and too poorly off to put much of the work out: and in company with the Miss Swanns, Henrietta had been helping to get the hurried mourning ready.

"And since when have you turned dressmaker to the village?" asked Mrs. Godwin.

"Oh, mamma, I never thought of it in that light," said Henrietta eagerly. "Miss Lavender looked so overdone yesterday, I took this skirt away from her. I was so glad to be able to help. I am just going round to the Nutshell, I shall be home again by tea time, for I have quite finished now," and with pardonable pride she held up the black garment for inspection.

But with all an Italian's superstitious dislike of the symbols of woe, Mrs. Godwin glanced at the sombre piece of work.

"I will not have you going round to the Nutshell again," she said. "I do not approve of your carrying parcels. If the work is finished I will send it by the garden boy." Ringing the bell, she gave the necessary order, while Henrietta stood by in silence, a little disappointed, but too intent upon various other ideas to attempt any form of argument about so small a matter.

"I wish, dear mamma," she began presently, "that you would let me help Miss Swann sometimes."

"In what way?" said Mrs. Godwin.

"Miss Swann has a class for the village girls, mamma. She reads aloud to them every Sunday afternoon. Her voice has not been strong lately, and she has done so much for me, I should so like to help her with some of her parish work. She always visits nearly every house in the village once a month, to change the book bags, and I want to go round with her. I am sure the bags are too heavy for her to carry without help. She seems so tired now on those days; it would be different if I went with her. And then, too, on Saturdays, the girls always carry flowers off with them to dress the graves for Sunday; Miss Lavender's garden is not a large one, and we have such quantities of roses doing nothing here. I should like to give some away every Saturday, when I go to the class."

Here Henrietta paused for lack of breath, while her mother looked at her in displeased surprise. "Really, my dear, I cannot imagine what has put such ideas into your head. I suppose Miss Swann has talked you into it all."

"It was I who talked her into it, I think, mamma, and I do so very much wish to help her."

"I am sorry for that, Henrietta, for it is altogether out of the question. Miss Swann has no right to undertake more work than she is fit for, in order to shift it upon other shoulders. No, my dear, I will not have you interrupt me. I am very sorry, as I said before, to disappoint you, but I can't have you go mixing yourself up with the peasants. It is all very well for governess-sort of people like the Miss Swanns, but quite a different thing for you. I will not have you behaving like a curate, all of a sudden, carrying parcels of books from house to house, in the hot weather, and getting tanned and over-heated, and being intimate with the villagers, and turning milliner to save lazier fingers. Why, your cheeks are quite flushed, and I am sure that your back is aching. Fancy a great-granddaughter of the Fontana's associating with all the riff-raff of Godwin's Worthy. I really could not allow it."

Henrietta looked terribly disappointed. "Cousin Evelyn visits in all the cottages, mamma. Miss Swann wouldn't take me where the people weren't respectable, and she was so pleased with the idea of my coming. You see there is no lady to do anything at the Rectory, now that Mr. Prosser is a widower. And though cousin Evelyn is always kind, she is often away, though she manages to do a great deal, especially among the navvies. There are so many at work on the new line now."

"Evelyn thinks herself a sufficiently great lady to do anything she likes, my dear child, and it is useless your quoting her to me. She is the last person whose example I should wish you to imitate. No! it is of no use continuing this discussion. You are giving me quite a headache, and don't look so absurdly disappointed. Once for all I will not allow you to have anything to do with the peasants."

When Mrs. Godwin spoke in this tone of voice Henrietta knew that resistance would be unavailing. Since the earliest days of her childhood, the idea of rebelling against her mother's authority had been an impossible one. She gave in now without further protest; but she could not quite keep the unusual tears from her eyes, and Mrs. Godwin noting them felt unaccountably taken aback.

"I have no objection to your giving away any flowers that will not be missed," she said in a more gracious voice. "I do not mean

that you may have all the village children up, and turn the garden into a playground; but you may take Miss Swann some flowers every week, if you like, so long as you do not cut anything from the hot-houses. Dressing graves seems to me to be a very morbid idea for young people, and surely the poor can grow flowers for themselves."

"Some of them do," said Henrietta, "but others have only just a plot for their carrots and cabbages."

"I don't want all these details," said Mrs. Godwin languidly. "I hope that needlework did not come from any cottage. One never knows where infection may linger. I wish you would not bring things here without consulting me first of all. You must tell Miss Swann that you will be unable to undertake anything more of the kind. You had better come downstairs now, and read and play to me for a little while. I consider that Miss Lavender has behaved in a very thoughtless manner—really presuming; but you cannot quite tell her that."

By this time, Henrietta realised that argument would be worse than useless. With the permission about the flowers she was fain to rest content. Perhaps the chief reason for Mrs. Godwin's emphatic prohibition might have been traced to a morbid fear of a possible risk of infection. Years ago, through the imprudence of a servant, May had once caught scarlet fever from a village girl. From this time forward the children's nurse had received strict orders to keep out of all cottages, Mrs. Godwin being convinced that every kind of disease lurked in the village. This idea having once taken root, she held to it tenaciously. But to sit like an Eastern Princess watching the workers of the earth, hearing the sob of misery, or the cry for aid, with careless ears, could never be Henrietta's *role*. The thought of pain could only be made bearable to her by the power of helping it.

In silence she followed her mother downstairs to the drawing-room, and mechanically prepared to read aloud. But the expression of her face made Mrs. Godwin uneasy for once, and some instinct led her to temporise. "Directly I have arranged for May's future," she said, "I shall see about yours, Henrietta, and when you are once married you will be able to go anywhere you like, within reasonable limits. But till then, my dear, you must let me judge what is best for you. Cottage visiting can never be suitably taken

up by unmarried women till they have reached middle age. To my mind, English people manage their daughters' affairs very badly, and girls are kept far too long in the school-room. When I was eighteen, I had been married for more than a year. May will be home directly, and that will give you plenty to think about. Put it all out of your head now, and let us finish our book."

"I suppose many young girls take up these ideas," she reflected, as Henrietta began obediently reading. "Hetty thinks too much. If she were a Roman Catholic, now, she would be turning devote. Fortunately I can always manage her; there is nothing like strong influence. But I wonder what had put this craze into her head all of a sudden."

Mrs. Godwin would have wondered still more could she have realised the amount of disappointment at work in Henrietta's heart. There was a depth of passionate feeling in her nature never yet fathomed by her mother. The old semi-Italian, semi-Greek spirit, only partially subdued, held in check by a silken rein of love. What if years of careless, heartless driving should make a break in the rein? Obedience had so far been a part of the very warp and woof of the girl's life, and Mrs. Godwin, like a parasitic plant, had a faculty for stifling the life out of everything round which she twined herself. But though the fettering of some natures is painless, even voluntary, with Henrietta it would mean nothing less than moral murder, or a fight to the death. Far off on the horizon the first clouds of a storm were rising. Vainly the girl strove to turn her attention to the adequate, and expressive rendering of the final chapters of an Italian translation of the "*Romance of the Forest*." It was very difficult to do justice to prose of this kind, and almost impossible to get up any reasonable interest in the woes and fainting fits of Adelaide.

The reading once over, Henrietta moved to the piano. Mrs. Godwin rather liked dance music when it was softly played. It generally lulled her to sleep at the end of the first ten minutes. But to-day, Henrietta forgot herself and wandered from waltzes to improvising, while her thoughts kept time to her fingers. She must not visit the poor till she was elderly or married. Middle age seemed to be a long way off, the lifetime of her present years over again, and matrimony only a vague idea in a dream. "If ever I do marry," she reflected, "I must live close to Godwin's Worthy. I couldn't

bear to go without seeing mamma every day." The thought troubled her. It seemed to demolish a portion of that fairy castle which she so often erected in the near present, only to see it again and again swept into the distance by her mother. "I wish I could grow older and wiser quicker," she thought, as her fingers wandered over the keys.

"My dear child," Mrs. Godwin presently remarked, "I don't know whose composition you are playing, but it is a most depressing piece of music. You had better go out and get some air. Start my musical box off for me; I shall be quite glad of a few cheerful airs. I can't think why it is, but, whenever you are with me for any time you always give me a headache." She flirted scent on her handkerchief as she spoke, and pressed one hand to her forehead. Henrietta felt remorseful; some people always have the knack of putting others in the wrong. An outsider might have taken in the tableau before him at a glance—the temperature at nearly 80, the sickly, sentimental novel on the table, the hot-house flowers, the shaded light; and against this the young girl with energetic life and loveliness in every line of her face and figure, life caught up and imprisoned, moving restlessly, looking out from the "wooden bars." A deer and a canary, and the deer could so easily have trampled on the canary!

"Go out of doors, and get some fresh air," Mrs. Godwin repeated, "and blow away your cobwebs."

Henrietta rose then, left the room, and went bare-headed into the garden. Passing the sun-dial and the upper terraces she took her way to the back of the house by a winding path to her own favourite haunt, half orchard ground, half flower garden, surrounded on three sides by an old, moss-grown wall, with rough steps in the corner angles of its brickwork; and a fine view from its top commanding the north-west. Here Henrietta often climbed to see the sunset. Besides, independently of the view, the place had a charm of its own. Apple and pear and medlar trees stood up in full bloom, and "all the grassy floor" seemed strewn with fallen petals. Rows of iris were pushing their green shafts through the brown earth of a square border which completely surrounded the trees. A narrow grass path divided this border from another one, dug under the wall, where grew many of those old-world flowers which vanish every winter and reappear every spring at their own sweet will.

There was a honeysuckle hedge just now coming into leaf, to face which, Henrietta every year sowed a hedge of sweet peas all round the fruit trees : otherwise no new comers disturbed the citizens of the soil. Through every season this part of the garden had a story for those that could read it. From its wild, heavy scented grape hyacinths, dropped here centuries ago, sure sentinels and heralds of some old Roman encampment buried far below. From its scarlet seeded Jerusalem lilies, and its celestial flowers, brought over to England from Palestine, down to its York and Lancaster and damask roses ; to the wallflowers which flourished in the old brickwork, and to the double polyanthus and spring hose-in-hose, which were just now scenting the air with their fragrance. But for once the garden appealed to Henrietta all in vain.

Pacing up and down the grass, her head bent, her hands lightly clasped, the girl paid no heed to the flowers, or the "sweet influences" of the spring evening. After a while, however, she became conscious of another person's presence, and looking up saw Paul leaning against the gnarled trunk of an apple tree, his eyes, in absent fashion, following her as she moved to and fro between the flowers. She came up to him at last, laid a light hand on his shoulder, and said, "Paul, I have a question to ask of you. What makes you so contented with your present life just as it is?"

"The certainty of losing it," he answered, half beneath his breath.

But Henrietta could not catch this remark, and after a moment repeated her question : "What makes you so contented and me so like the Dryad?"

He looked at her affectionately. "You could never really be like her, Hetty. You forget, the Dryad had no soul."

Henrietta sighed. "There is a bit of paganism in me, nevertheless," she said, "a touch of old Rome or Athens. I want to understand things as I go along. I want to act now. I feel as if I could not endure the delays of life. I want to leave my tree to go out into the world, Paul."

Paul shook his head. "Believe me, Hetty, the kind of life for which you crave will never bring you nearer to happiness than you stand at this moment. What makes you long to go out into the world all of a sudden?"

"The thought of all the pain in it, Paul. It is not for happiness

that I would go, but for sorrow. I daresay some phlegmatic people wouldn't understand me," she went on, "but I believe I am capable of feeling more pleasure and pain in one day than some people experience in the whole of their colourless lives put together. I shall never live to be old so far as mere years count. I live too fast in myself. I would pray give me life and liberty, the kind of life for which I crave, if only for one day, in which I could say, 'I have lived.' For, Paul, the thought of all the unheeded pain in some lives is unbearable. It makes one almost feel as if one could break one's heart or go mad over it."

She paused here, suddenly, startled at the effect of her words upon her companion.

"Hetty," he said; "Hetty." There was a dismayed sound in his voice that she could not understand. He took a turn up the path and then came back to her; and when he spoke again it was with a look of mingled apprehension and incredulity on his face, a look that might almost have belonged to an old man.

"If you have begun to realise it I can well believe that to you the mere thought of suffering is torture," he said. "Yet believe me, Hetty, life's battlefield is a far more terrible place for the onlookers than for those who are fighting or tending the wounded. All pain should become more bearable if one can do something to help it; but to say that one cannot bear the thought of it, *that* is cowardice; and to say that you will never live to be old is just where you are making a mistake. It is only another way of confessing that you expect circumstances to be too strong for you, and you are made of better stuff than that, Hetty. You are wrong if you fancy that the stress of life can only be endured by phlegmatic natures and that it kills the sensitive ones. It is generally in books that people die young of broken hearts or of disappointed ambitions, not in real life. Trouble and trial don't kill, as a rule, for a very long time indeed. And *bon gré, mal gré* as the years go by, we most of us get through an amount of mental and physical suffering that we should reckon altogether impossible at the start. It seems to me that willingly or unwillingly we are all bound for affliction's furnace; and whether we come out better or worse, stronger or weaker, depends very much on the spirit in which we go in. You remember what others have said better than I can say it—that one should try to be affected by everything in the right way; to husband

one's powers; and to master the strength of each impression made upon us by circumstances."

He paused here, and looking at her pleadingly said:—

"Princess, you will find that the furnace comes in sight all too soon for most of us without our hastening to meet it. The battle-field for men and women is no fit place for children. You are young yet to worry your head about the outside world. I hope that it may be a long time before you have much pain or sorrow to undergo or to share with other people. You have your gardening, your books and your music. Believe me nature and books and music are three guardian angels. Can't you try to be content with learning what they can teach you? Other lives will join yours soon enough. Why should you grudge to yourself your own innocent pleasures, and deny to those who love you the joy of keeping you sheltered and happy as long as such sheltered happiness is possible?"

Henrietta's head drooped. "As long as it is possible, yes," she said; "but if it is impossible? I am not a child any longer, Paul. Perhaps I am foolish though to make such a fuss, and to seem so discontented all of a sudden. It is only that I wanted to help Miss Lavender, and mamma thinks that I am too young for cottage visiting. My life has looked so selfish to me lately. I wish that I could do anything to help other people."

"Yes, I understand," said Paul, in rather a surprised voice; "but it seems to me that my aunt is right, Hetty; and as for visiting or helping poor people, there are just as many sad rich ones in the world; begin on them first. To go no further than your aunt Catherine: hers is a sad life, hardly likely to last many years longer, so far as one can judge; and there is my father. If you were to look after his study as you look after my attic, and put a flower on his desk every day, it would please him, I am sure."

"Would he really like it?" she asked, wistfully. "I heard mamma say one day that he couldn't bear to find other people in his library."

"You just try," said Paul, smiling; then his face growing graver, he turned his head away in the direction of the park. "There's Ted," he said. "He came back last night. You can do many things for him that no one else can."

"Ted," said Henrietta, thoughtfully. "*Sanssouci*? Some people

would say that he hadn't a care in the world now that he is so much stronger."

"Hasn't he?" queried Paul, in his quietest voice. "True, he is stronger, but that will never mean that he is quite strong, I am afraid. Do you suppose that it is nothing to him that he can never take more than a five-mile walk, when other men do their twenty or thirty easily; that he can very seldom carry his own gun, and will never ride to hounds again? You don't understand Ted, Hetty, very few people do."

He paused for a long minute, while his eyes came back to her face and wandered from it to the pear tree under which she was standing. The wind, playing among the blossoming boughs, scattered the milky white flower-petals on the bright rings of her hair. "As for being useful," he ended, "all things have their use. What would you say to the trees if they were so anxious to bear fruit that they refused to blossom first of all, or to enjoy the sun and the wind and the dew."

Henrietta smiled, then sighed. "I feel very stupid to-day," she said. "I can't quite explain myself. It is only natural that you shouldn't quite understand me. But, all the same, I see what you mean. I see and I will try to remember." She turned away and left him; and he made no attempt to follow her, only stood watching the light figure till it disappeared from sight.

But if Henrietta could have seen the look on his face she would have come straight back again. This life is very like the tower of Babel. We are all condemned to talk different languages, and sympathy doesn't invariably give one a pass-key, or if one possesses a key it isn't always safe to make use of it.

"So, I don't understand her," said Paul to himself. "It's a very good *rôle* to follow, if I can only keep to it."

CHAPTER VI.

ON a lovely evening in spring, May returned to Godwin's Rest. Henrietta was standing at the hall door when the carriage drove up, and unselfish in her affection brought the traveller straight to the drawing room.

For once Mrs. Godwin left the sofa, coming forward in haste,

clasping May close, with eager kisses, and gazing the while with mingled surprise and approval at the very fashionable young lady now standing before her.

May returned the embrace French fashion, next presented her cheek to her uncle, then releasing herself stretched out both arms with a gesture of relief.

"I am tired and thirsty, and dusty and hot, almost too hot to be kissed," she said, tossing her pretty hat upon the sofa, and looking about her with bright, rather amused eyes.

"Dear me! how strange it seems to be back. I felt like Rip Van Winkle when Paul came up to me first of all in the station. I scarcely recognised him, he has grown so imposing."

"If that speech is to be taken in a complimentary sense, allow me to return it," said Paul, smiling.

"No one ever called me imposing before," said May. She sat down now in an armchair, leaned her head comfortably back and regarded her cousin with a meditative air.

"He has grown up most wonderfully handsome," she thought. "His eyes are altogether too fine for a man. They are even better than mine, which is saying a good deal. But he looks too grave, he wants waking up; I daresay they all do."

Aloud she said: "Perhaps, Paul, you will give me some tea next. Go and pour it out for me, Henrietta, there's a dear. You can't think how nice it is to see an English meal again."

Paul rose at once; it was nearly ten o'clock; but cold chicken and tongue stood ready for the traveller on a side table, together with the tea equipage.

Since her entrance May seemed to have become the centre of attraction to everyone in the room. Though very small and slender in figure it was not likely that she would ever pass unnoticed. A quantity of fair hair, piled high in soft coils; a brilliant pink and white complexion; a small nose, "tip-tilted"; and fairy-like hands and feet, made up her principal attractions; while in startling, yet undeniably piquant contrast to her fair skin, she possessed a pair of black eyes, black-lashed and keen as a bird's, surmounted by delicately pencilled eyebrows. All the freshness of youth was on her face. Her smiles were frequent, and the least giving-way of the lips showed her pretty teeth. There was something foreign in the movement of her hands and in her vivacious manner; but her

voice was low and soft, and her self-possession seemed perfect. If Senancour's saying be true—"Tout depend d'une certaine confiance en nous-mêmes"—then May had little to fear in the present or in the future.

She prattled on now about her journey, of the dust, the slowness of the trains, and the rough crossing, giving it as her opinion that the people who suffered from *mal-de-mer* should all wear a ticket and be kept in a separate boat by themselves. Finally, having exhausted her travels and all attendant discomforts in smiling fashion, she began to ask questions and to demand the local news.

"Your cousin Evelyn is at the Chase already," said Mrs. Godwin. "She went up for the season as usual, but a narrow escape of typhoid obliged her to come back to the country, by the doctor's orders, though she is hardly likely to spend the whole summer here."

"Yes, and cousin Sol came back last week, too," said Henrietta, laughingly; "he is beginning to grumble already. He wants to persuade Uncle John to go yachting for nine months in the year instead of for five. Aunt Catherine is still at the Grange, and mamma's cousin, M. de Brie, is staying with her, and several other people."

"Why isn't Aunt Catherine in town, Hetty, she ought to be at this time of the year?"

"Your aunt has not been well," said Mrs. Godwin. "It is the old complaint, something wrong with the heart, I believe; but you know nothing puts her out so much as enquiries of any sort. She never poses as an invalid in the fashion that your cousin Evelyn has begun to affect."

"Evelyn never posed as anything that I am aware of," said Godwin, dryly.

Mrs. Godwin slightly shrugged her shoulders, while May said: "But, mamma, won't Aunt Catherine be going up for part of the season this year?"

"No, May, I believe not."

"How tiresome! I wanted her to present me, and Henrietta too."

"To present you, my dear?"

"Why not?" said May, tranquilly. "I don't suppose that you are up to much gaiety, mamma, certainly not to taking a house in town, which is what I should like. Aunt Catherine might just as

well have chaperoned us. We should have made Belgrave Square much livelier for her."

"I have no doubt that you would," said her uncle smiling.

"There will be no London gaiety for either of you poor children this year," said Mrs. Godwin. "You must get what happiness you can out of the country. If your uncle takes you up to see the pictures, it will be the utmost that you must expect."

There was something so markedly disagreeable both in her face and voice that May noticed it directly. Godwin said nothing, only picked up a newspaper and began reading it with a slight indrawing of his lower lip. But silence seemed to have fallen on the party, which was broken by Henrietta's eager voice.

"We shall have plenty of gaiety here, mamma, when once we begin to go about. The cathedral and college people don't go away till the fashionables are just coming back. The bishop's wife is very kind and pleasant. I met her the other day, for we travelled together when Uncle John and I went to town a fortnight ago, on a shopping expedition. She said, May, that she hoped we should be able to come to see her next month, when the choral festival takes place. Besides we have one big party in prospect for next Monday, at the Grange. Cousin Sol is giving a musical 'at home.'"

"For the benefit of the unenlightened, I suppose," said May with a little *moue*.

"There is to be a dinner party first," said her mother.

"You can make your first appearance there better than anywhere else, since town is out of the question. Your aunt never gives small dinners. She asked Henrietta first of all, and I accepted for you, May. Probably your aunt did not know that you would be back again. And then she called, and said that Henrietta must come too, or else she wouldn't have you; dear Aunt Catherine is so quaint."

"About as quaint as the sphinx," said Godwin, *sotto voce*.

Mrs. Godwin seemed oblivious of the gathering cloud on her brother-in-law's brow, but May noticing it immediately, deftly changed the subject. She had finished her nondescript meal by this time, and with evident willingness presently met her mother's next suggestion that she had better go to bed.

It was past eleven o'clock when the two sisters went upstairs together, but even then Henrietta lingered, delighted to have someone to wait upon. She helped her sister to undress with an

air of pretty interest, interest deepening presently into a slight perplexity.

Once seated in an easy chair in the bedroom, May did not appear to be very sleepy, and seemed in no hurry to say good-night. Pulling down her hair, she began plaiting it into any number of tight little tails, carefully damping each plait.

"To-morrow will be Sunday," she remarked. "I always crimp up on Saturday nights, and particularly to-night. You are a luckier girl than I am. If I only had your forehead, like an old Greek or rather like a young one, and all your curly locks, I should be perfectly contented with my own appearance?"

Henrietta looked affectionately at her sister.

"Why, May, your hair is lovely. You have the prettiest fringe imaginable."

"By the aid of tongs," said May. "Sit down there, Rietta, I want to talk. Can you keep a secret, I wonder?"

"Oh, yes, May, I suppose I could, but I have never tried yet. You enjoyed your tour in the Black Forest, didn't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Strafford was very kind, and Patrick, Captain Strafford I mean, was even nicer than the tour, which is saying a great deal."

"Captain Strafford, I don't remember your mentioning him, May."

May laughed.

"He, and Mrs. Strafford, and Ella and I used to have delightful rides," she said. "He gave me that dear little whip," abandoning her hair and picking up a pretty gold-mounted cane from the tray of her open box.

"I am so glad that he is a cousin of cousin Evelyn's. We shall see him over here on Monday, I expect. He asked me what my home was like. He draws very well, and my description of the scenery seemed to take his fancy, not to speak of the old house. Godwin's Rest is a picturesque old place, with a picturesque view, you know," she ended demurely, though a suspicious curve at the corners of her mouth indicated mischief.

"But, May, is this Captain Strafford going to stay at the Chase?" asked Henrietta in some bewilderment.

"Oh, yes, he has been abroad for his health, on leave, but he seems nearly well again now. He thinks that a month or two in England will quite set him up again, and that the country is at its

best in May apparently. We only parted company at the station. He will be staying at the Chase for the present."

"Did you travel—?" Henrietta began, then stopped while May laughed outright.

"Oh, no, I travelled nominally with Fraulein Sandiekatze, a most learned lady, who has come to England to give a series of lectures on the great Jean Paul. She was an excellent escort, buried in her books in the train, and quite incapable on board the boat. Patrick, Captain Strafford I mean, enlivened the way wonderfully. The poor 'Sandcat' was so overcome while we crossed that she just sat at one end of the boat, and groaned. He was very good to her. He went half-a-dozen times to get brandy, or hard biscuits, or soda water and other things; but dear me! she was perfectly lemon-coloured by the time we landed. I must own that I was a little surprised when Captain Strafford appeared at the first halt on our journey, and so was my duenna: but he said that he had important business in England, on urgent private affairs. He did that part very well," May ended half to herself.

Henrietta was silent, a vague feeling of discomfort stealing over her, while May's talk soon flowed on again.

"He is very good-looking, and well connected, and all that, and his battery is at Gibraltar. He goes back there in two months for a little time, and then he talks of selling out, or retiring, or whatever it is called. He has great expectations: but I should like to see 'Gib' immensely. I should die of ennui in six months here." She was twirling the little whip round and round upon her fingers now, but she might almost as well have struck Henrietta with it. This last speech betrayed such a lack of affection, or rather so much carelessness of the feelings of other people.

"But, May," said Henrietta, getting in a word at last, and startled by this double declaration. "You don't mean that you—that Captain Strafford, I mean—"

The blundering sentence remained unfinished, for May suddenly bent forward and kissed both the flushed cheeks opposite.

"You dear old-fashioned darling, I don't mean anything, and I cannot possibly answer for Captain Strafford. Men are so inconsequent at the best of times; but if you must hear the truth, I suppose, now I come to think of it, that I have as good as said 'yes' to him, by giving him leave to come over here. He is every-

thing that is desirable, Rietta. He has large private means from an old uncle, besides his pay. I like gold mountings," appreciatively regarding the whip. "Why Hetty, you don't look a scrap pleased. What possible fault can you find with a man like Captain Strafford?"

"You have left out the only thing that I should care about," said Henrietta with a little quiver in her voice.

May looked at her, tied another pigtail, and then said :

"Well, I don't exactly hate him. He is quite the nicest person I have ever met, so far : for he lets me have my own way in everything, and that is just what I have been trying for unsuccessfully all my life. Shall I do another plait, or do you think six will be enough?"

"But," said Henrietta, ignoring this question, and more bewildered than ever, "I can't remember that you ever mentioned Captain Strafford in any of your letters to mamma."

"Of course I never mentioned him. I kept it for a surprise," said May airily.

Henrietta sighed. "I expect mamma will be very much surprised, and, oh, May, I am half afraid that she won't be at all pleased either."

Apparently this view of the case had never struck May before.

"I hope you don't mean that there will be a fuss," she said. "Really I don't see what possible objection mamma can make to him. He neither gambles, nor gets into debt : indeed he has been a model of propriety all his life, only he will ride in steeple-chases. He has had his collar-bone broken twice, not to speak of half his ribs. I do trust that mamma will not take a dislike to him, for it is quite too late now to alter things."

"All the same I do wish that you could have mentioned it," said her sister, who had good reason for feeling perturbed.

"Would you like me to have mentioned the French music teacher, too," said May, divided between a strong desire to laugh, and some other feeling which struggled with it. He wrote me a frantic farewell the week I left school. He said I was as cold and as distant as the moon, and he declared his intention of dying, or some such nonsense, in order to fill the aching void left by my disappearance. Monsieur Gresset is so melodramatic. It is not the person that he cares about, but the way in which one plays. He

would fall in love with a phonograph of Arabella Goddard, if he could afford to buy up her fingers in a bottled state. Oh, Rietta, don't look at me as if I were a new kind of puzzle, or your eyes will drop out. Why have you grown so dreadfully proper during my absence?"

Then suddenly her mood changed. Sitting down in her sister's lap, and twining both arms round her neck she said: "They teach more things at school than you have learnt in the woods, little sister. It is a different setting altogether, and I cannot get back into my old place somehow."

Henrietta returned the caress clingingly. "I wish that you had never gone away, White May."

"Perhaps I ought to echo the wish, but somehow I can't," said May. "To change the subject, whatever makes mamma keep the house like a cucumber frame for heat? It is enough to choke one. I only wonder how you all stand it."

"Mamma is so sensitive, May, her throat is weak, and she catches cold so easily."

"The very way to make her worse then," said May, "and not half so bad for her as for all the rest of us. I really cannot stand being boiled every evening. There is nothing more dangerous than an over-heated atmosphere."

"Mamma could not bear a change. She is not so strong as you think, May."

"Stove plants never are. She looks well, what do you call it—etiolated."

"You cannot turn a stove plant into a hardy one," said Henrietta, half indignant at May's manner.

"Not when the gardener is so tender-hearted. There, Rietta, we will not fall out over mamma the first evening: only if she wishes to see much of me she must not send the thermometer up to eighty. Fancy having fires this weather! how you stand it yourself, I cannot imagine."

"The drawing-room is such a large room," said Henrietta, "and I think there must be a good bit of Italy in my composition. I can stand any amount of heat. Oh, May! how nice it is to see you sitting there, and how delightful it will be to go about together."

"Wonderful confession!" said May. "I do believe you are

beginning to pine at last for a little rational society, and that you may actually be getting tired of your trees and woods."

"No," said Henrietta, "it is not that. I love the woods more than ever."

"All the same, something has altered you: you look waked up."

"I think I am waked up thoroughly," said Henrietta. "I am sure I shall like going about."

"There is very little doubt about that," said May smiling. "I don't mean to go anywhere without you this summer, which is generous of me. I wonder if you know in the least how good-looking you are."

Henrietta blushed, lifted up her head, and regarded her sister with amused eyes.

"Yes, I know that I am pretty," she said simply, "and I am very glad of it. Paul said something about it the other day, and mamma told me last week that I was a plain likeness of my Italian great-grandmother, who was a most celebrated beauty: but I would rather be thought like the Godwins."

"Paul first," May thought, "mamma last." But something in the expression of the face opposite to her restrained all outward expression of this reflection. Aloud she only said that the Italian great-grandmother must have been a very enviable woman, and then, having satisfactorily finished her hair plaiting, tripped off to bed, while Henrietta went to her own little room, to toss about, unable to sleep, with a mind full of wonder and perplexity over the sister that school had sent back to her. True the germ had been there, but the growth of some natures is amazingly quick, and May had returned home "educated" in more senses than the word usually implies.

Henrietta knew by intuition that May's revelations would be anything but pleasing to her mother. Under Mrs. Godwin's languor lay hidden a great deal of persistence, and an amount of ambition that few people could have fathomed.

For the first year after her marriage she had reigned supreme as mistress of The Chase, for her father-in-law was a widower, and John unmarried. Her husband's love had brought her a princely establishment, carriages, horses, and fine clothes: everything in fact best suited to her ease-loving luxurious nature.

But with the elder Mr. Godwin's death, and the crash that

followed it, came the end of her magnificence. Such a woman could never sink contentedly into the position of a poor man's wife, or go about to small parties, generally in the same dress, and contentedly on a level with her neighbours.

No. Mrs. Godwin followed her husband to Italy, and after his death returned to England with her brother-in-law's permission, to occupy Godwin's Rest in his absence; veiling her bitter disappointment, and with some cleverness merely shifting her position.

No longer able to pose as a pattern of luxury, and bid others admire, she now took her stand on a platform of lofty grief. Not over her lost wealth, that must never be hinted at, but over what had followed this first catastrophe: the death of her husband, the war, and her exile, as she termed it, from the land of her birth. By her own account nothing but a strong sense of duty kept her in England to manage her poor brother's household, and to see to his comfort. To him she devoted the wreck of her life. For the rest, she wrote reams of Italian poetry, bringing it out at her own expense, as no publisher seemed to appreciate the beauties of her style. She was a rising author, according to her friends, and one or two of her books generally lay about on the drawing-room table in dainty and tasteful bindings, admired but unread; few people in the neighbourhood being sufficiently well acquainted with Italian to pose as critics. Meanwhile, drawing rapidly nearer, she pictured a future which would see the Dower House, the original family residence, restored to more than its former splendour, and the Chase and its present owner completely eclipsed by the superior magnificence of Godwin's Rest.

(To be continued.)

The Face and Its Revelations.

By MAUD WHEELER.

ALTHOUGH compulsory education is now an accomplished fact, and the standard of general education of the up-to-date girl covers so large a field of knowledge, there is still one important study omitted,

which for practical use and helpfulness is second to none. To the man who wishes to avoid many serious mistakes in life, and the woman many a heartache, how all important is a knowledge of the character and tastes of those who daily cross their path, with whom, either the pursuit of business or pleasure throws them into contact. No one surely would question the late poet laureate's remark ;—

“ How often do we forge a life-long trouble for ourselves
By taking true for false and false for true ” ;

and how bitter it is to be deceived by those we trust most, many can testify. Yet how few ever seek to gain a true conception of those with whom they associate, as though forsooth it were a waste of time and trouble. With some persons this deficiency—the lack of an accurate standard by which to measure the personality of those who make up their environment—is happily supplemented, to a very large extent, by intuition. But even were this sense of discernment more general it would still be inadequate as a revealer of character, and this for two reasons.

In the first place, comparatively few of those who possess intuitive perception are aware of the great value of this mysterious faculty, and rarely trust themselves entirely to its guidance, failing to realise that nature is a much truer diviner of human character than reason can ever hope to be. They consequently either ignore this great gift or allow other considerations and side influences to bias their judgement, and are carried away by an attractive manner or a pleasing appearance. The second weak point as regards intuition is its limitation, so that even in cases where the inner and finer perceptions are not distorted or misled by preconceived notions or exterior influences, the instinctive dislike or distrust of any particular individual is of a vague and unsatisfactory character, too indefinite to be of practical value or put to wide use in affairs of moment, as the engaging of servants, employées, or in the gravest choice of all—a life partner.

Though intuition is so limited in its sphere of usefulness, we have a sure and infallible guide to character in the face, which to those who can read the writing of Nature lies like an open book, revealing the soul within. The great majority, however, go about with closed eyes, unobservant of the startling revelations that surround them.

The great discovery of the eminent German physician, Dr. Gall

—nearly a century ago—that signs of character exist in the brain, was at one time treated with derision, and the designation “bumpology” contemptuously applied to the study of phrenology. Even now, amongst men and women who are ignorant of the first principles of phrenology, the idea largely exists that it is by means of depressions and elevations on the surface of the skull that the phrenologist is guided to his conclusions. Nothing could be more erroneous or absurd. It is only by an estimation of the size of the head, from the opening of the ear to the crown of the head, and again from the same apex of the ear to the back of the head, that phrenological conclusions are based.

The thickness of the skull, therefore, which varies in different parts of the head, is no obstacle to the phrenologist. All he needs to discover is whether the head is most developed in the upper portion or the base, in front of the ears or at the back.

The greater the distance from the tip of the ear to the crown of the head the more ideal is the subject : and the breadth of the face from ear to ear is also of great significance. A face that is wide in the middle section, *i.e.*, across the ears, measuring from the tips, denotes a selfish and materialistic nature, particularly if the lobes of the ears are large and heavy. This is clearly shown in the animal world—the bull-dog, tiger and eagle being broad in that portion of the face, types of cruelty and savageness—while in direct contrast to these we find hares, deer and sheep with thin narrow heads, and corresponding gentle and docile natures. Just above and behind the ear, extending backwards, the organ of destructiveness is situated, which gives executive ability and the force to carry out whatever is undertaken. These are the hard workers of the world, the indomitable persistent strugglers, who know what they want and determine to get it. Immediately in front of the ear we have the organ of alimentativeness, imparting a keen appreciation of the pleasures of the table. When the organ is well developed it gives a full appearance to the face in front of the ears, instead of the depression at the side so often noticeable, and points to a due sense of the material needs of the body. Good cooks generally have this organ developed, and wherever it is present in any individual, he or she would always keep a good table, even if by reason of acquisitiveness they should prove stingy in other respects. The ear itself is indicative of character—large ears manifest a materialistic and coarse nature ;

small ears, on the contrary, denote refinement and a less passionate nature. If they are small and lie close to the head, timidity and want of self-reliance are indicated, especially if they slope backwards. In the case of timid animals, such as hares and deer, this is very noticeable. The more erect the ear so much the more courage and force displayed; and these qualities are developed to aggressiveness when the ears not only stand upright but also out from the head. It is important to notice the distance between the ear and eye, as when there is a good breadth from the ear to the outer corner of the eye capacity and marked ability are shown. The tip of the ear should not rise above the level of the eye; where this is seen a hasty and revengeful nature may be inferred.

Passing on to the forehead the student of human nature should draw an imaginary horizontal line across, dividing it into two equal sections. In the upper portion we have comparison and reflection, so that if the forehead is full near the hair the subject will be of a philosophic reflective temperament, much given to weighing the pros and cons of any question, and consequently sometimes find a difficulty in arriving at any definite conclusion. In the lower portion of the forehead we have the perceptive faculties located, and when it is well developed above the eyebrows an observing and shrewd power of discernment is present. While a high forehead denotes the capacity for acquiring knowledge—and if rounded and prominent as well as high, benevolence and the religious sentiment—it is amongst the wide low brows that we must look for talent. More originality and brilliancy is found with this shaped forehead than with the more painstaking high type.

There are three types of foreheads—the perpendicular or straight, the retreating, and the projecting. The first of these is the most desirable, and if also square in contour points to firmness, a quality which is further accentuated by straight well-marked eyebrows. An arched forehead discloses more tenderness than force; sensitiveness is the attribute of the oval brow. Retreating foreheads—this does not include those which have a slight slope backwards—betray weak intellectual powers; and a narrow forehead has the same signification. Although wrinkles are so much dreaded, a smooth forehead without any lines or wrinkles betrays a hard unsympathetic nature. Perpendicular lines in the centre, above the nose, are a sign of concentration.

Leaving this portion of the face we come to the eyes, which are the most expressive of all the features and the most misleading. Large, round, open eyes invariably betray great interest in the opposite sex, but unless set close together in the face they do not necessarily imply voluptuousness; only persons with these eyes always prefer the companionship of the opposite sex to that of their own. The long almond-shaped eye—this appearance is really due to the shape of the eyelid and not the eye proper—is a mark of a crafty and cunning disposition; and if in the same face the eyebrows are seen to meet above the nose the subject is deceitful. Pale blue eyes are not at all to be desired, as their owners are not only weak and vacillating but also treacherous. Dark blue eyes are more trustworthy, and grey orbs point to a romantic nature. Green eyes are indicative of talent, while brown ones announce an affectionate and unselfish nature. Really black eyes are most uncommon, though many are so dark as to convey that impression, but fortunately there are very few of a decided black, and these reveal a very passionate and ardent temperament, and cannot safely be trusted. The eyebrows must not be overlooked, for they too have a tale to tell. Those that arch high above the eyes, disclose a weak and thoughtless character. Eyebrows lighter than the hair also imply weakness. The long sweeping eyebrows that run close to the outer corner of the eye, show an economical careful disposition, but if they curve over the eye and then describe an angular bend towards the bridge of the nose, a revengeful temper is present. Practical people have straight and rather thick eyebrows. We now come to the most prominent feature of the face, the nose, which has a great deal of information to convey. A nose that is flat at the root between the eyes, is a sign of a very short memory. The prominent hooked Roman nose indicates power, and a commanding disposition. The straight Greek nose is characteristic of refinement, and passive endurance. In striking contrast to the refined delicacy of the Grecian type we have the snub nose, which is associated with coarseness. If, however, there is a perceptible lump at the tip, an imaginative, often literary tendency may be recognised. A thin dropping nose usually accompanies a melancholy temperament, but when this feature is broad and thick, dropping at the tip, it is significant of sensualism. Curiosity is associated with a thin nose which turns up at the point. The space between the nose and